



Communicable/Infectious Disease Health Alert

Through surveillance measures, the McHenry County Department of Health has identified an increase in cases of *bordetella pertussis* (whooping cough) in Cary. Currently, there are confirmed and probable cases reported.

In 2010, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 27,550 cases of pertussis (whooping cough) were reported in the U.S., but many more go undiagnosed and unreported. There is an ongoing outbreak in the state of California with 9,143 cases reported in 2010 and 2,462 cases reported so far in 2011. Ten infant deaths have been reported in this outbreak. In the state of Illinois, 1,057 cases were reported in 2010. Nine case of pertussis were reported to the McHenry County Department of Health in 2010 and 60 in 2009.

Pertussis can cause serious illness in infants, children and adults and can even be life-threatening, especially in infants. Vaccinated children and adults can still become infected with and transmit pertussis; however, disease is less likely to be severe.

This notice is provided to you so that you are informed about pertussis and know what to watch for in order to control the spread of the disease. We are offering the following guidelines to help reduced the spread of Pertussis in school settings. It would also be helpful to pass this information along to your staff, teachers and coaches so that any child with a symptoms can be sent to the school nurse for evaluation.

- Provide education and information on Pertussis to school staff and teachers; including what symptoms to watch for. Attached is a fact sheet on Pertussis which can be duplicated and distributed to staff and parents.
- Remember, Pertussis is an illness that affects adults as well as children. Immunity from vaccination wanes after 3-5 years.
- Teachers should refer coughing children to the school nurse for evaluation
- Staff (coaches, instructors) that is involved in sports teams or other extracurricular school groups should refer coughing children to the school nurse for evaluation.
- If there is an individual with a cough on a sports team, evaluate other members for coughing. Sports teams are an important mode of transmission in middle/high schools.
- Evaluation by the school nurse might include questions such as:
 - When did your cold symptoms start?

- When did your cough start?
- Do you feel like you are choking and cannot breathe when you cough?
- Is the coughing worse at night?
- Do you have coughing spells where you feel like you cannot stop coughing?
- Do you vomit after you cough?
- Are there other people in your house with a cough?
- School Nurse should monitor for any teachers/staff that are coughing
- Symptomatic students, teachers and staff should be referred for medical evaluation. A nasopharyngeal swab is the only accepted confirmatory test for Pertussis.
- Immunocompromised individuals that may have been exposed to Pertussis should be referred to their physician.
- School nurse should notify health department of any suspect cases or individuals referred for medical evaluation
- Any individual with a confirmed case of Pertussis, whether student or staff, must stay home until they have been on antibiotics for five days.
- Upon notification of a case of Pertussis in school/daycare, begin surveillance of contacts. Think about “zones of exposure.” Consider the following groups:
 - Play groups
 - Bus contacts
 - Sports team
 - Extracurricular activities
 - Study groups
 - Driver’s education
- Assess the immunization status of all students under the age of 6 and refer for immunizations as needed.
- Contacts of cases that do not take antibiotics, or students who are not up-to-date with their Pertussis immunizations should be considered for exclusion from school or child care for 21 days after their last exposure. This preventive measure may help protect children from getting Pertussis and is especially important for infants in whom Pertussis can be severe
- Encourage handwashing and respiratory etiquette. This includes covering your cough with a tissue, coughing into your elbow if no tissue is available and proper disposal of tissues. Cover your cough posters are available at the MCDH website at www.mcdh.info under the Communicable Disease home page
- Remind students that sharing drinks, eating utensils and cosmetics such as lip gloss is not hygienic. Sharing increases the risk of spreading a variety of diseases.
- If there is a case of Pertussis in you school/preschool/daycare, consider sending a letter to notify parents/guardian about Pertussis. Letters can be distributed to classes, grades, sports teams, extra-curricular groups or to the entire school depending on the situation. Please contact the McHenry County Department of Health Communicable Disease Program at 815-334-4500 if you are considering sending a letter.