

PERTUSSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH) FACT SHEET

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a highly infectious and usually mild illness that is easily transmitted through coughing and sneezing and may last for several months. Symptoms of pertussis may appear 5 to 10 days following exposure but can take up to 21 days to develop. The first symptoms of pertussis are similar to those of a common cold: a runny nose, low-grade fever and a mild occasional cough for at least 2 weeks, which can become severe and spasmodic—with a distinctive “whooping” sound—and may trigger vomiting after a coughing episode. Even though the disease may be milder in older children, adolescents, and adults, **those who are infected may unknowingly transmit the disease to other vulnerable persons, including unimmunized or incompletely immunized infants.**

Following increased disease activity from 2010 and throughout 2011, DuPage County has continued to receive reports of pertussis cases with the majority occurring in children and adolescents. As the 2011-2012 academic year progresses, we appreciate parent’s cooperation and vigilance toward early detection, treatment, and prevention of pertussis cases, particularly among school-age children.

Most people recover completely from pertussis, **but complications from the disease can be severe and possibly life-threatening in high risk groups, especially infants under one year**, and children who have not been fully immunized against the disease.

Family members (including parents) who exhibit any of the symptoms of pertussis should contact their physician to arrange for appropriate testing and treatment with antibiotics. Persons with pertussis must be isolated from day care, school, work, and public gatherings until at least 5 days after the start of appropriate antibiotic therapy.

Since infants, children and adults are best protected from pertussis by immunizations, please review immunization records of your student and other family members. **Infants and young children should receive a series of DTaP vaccines in their first 5 years of life, and adolescents and adults should receive a single Tdap vaccine at 11 years or older.**

In addition, frequent hand washing and respiratory hygiene (e.g. covering your cough, coughing into tissues, disposing of tissues promptly) are important practices that help to limit the spread of this and other similar infections.

If you have any further questions, please contact the DuPage County Health Department at 630-682-7400, ext. 7553. More information on pertussis disease and vaccination is available at: www.cdc.gov/vaddines/vpd-vac/pertussis/