

PERTUSSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH)

Frequently Asked Questions

Prepared by Community Consolidated School District 181

What is pertussis?

Pertussis (or whooping cough) is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*. Complications from pertussis can be severe and life-threatening in high risk groups, especially in infants under one year and young children that have not been fully immunized against pertussis.

How common is pertussis?

There were 268 confirmed cases of pertussis in DuPage County in 2011. The number of pertussis cases from January 2012 to July 2012 already exceeded that number.

What are symptoms of pertussis?

Initial symptoms resemble a common cold and include a runny nose, low grade fever, and mild cough. After 1-2 weeks, the infected individual's cough persists, and may be severe (may even trigger vomiting) and spasmodic. Individuals that exhibit symptoms of pertussis should contact their health care provider for appropriate testing and treatment with antibiotics.

How is pertussis spread?

Pertussis is spread when the infected person coughs or sneezes in close proximity to others.

Is there is a vaccine for pertussis?

The DTaP, the recommended pertussis vaccine for infants and children, protects against three diseases: Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis. Children are required to have four DTaP vaccines before entering kindergarten; the last booster must be given on or after the child's fourth birthday. Children are not fully protected until they receive the entire vaccination series. Because the pertussis component of the DTaP vaccines given prior to kindergarten entry wanes over time, adolescents (age 10 or older) and adults should receive a single Tdap vaccine. Any protection (immunity) developed after having pertussis will wear off, leaving the individual at risk for developing pertussis again. The Tdap vaccine is needed to protect individuals (above the age of ten) that have had pertussis.

The Tdap vaccine is now a state requirement for all students entering sixth and ninth grade.

If you have further questions about pertussis or other health-related concerns, please contact your child's school nurse or health care provider.