



April 18, 2017

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Your son/daughter was exposed to pertussis (whooping cough) at school. Pertussis is an infection that affects the airways and is easily spread from person to person by coughing or sneezing. It can cause a severe cough that can last for weeks or months, sometimes leading to coughing fits and/or vomiting. Anyone can get pertussis and it can be very dangerous for infants and people with weakened immune systems or lung problems.

Recommendations:

1. **If your son or daughter has a cough:**
Make an appointment with your teen's healthcare provider as soon as possible and tell the healthcare provider that your teen has been exposed to pertussis. Take this letter with you to the doctor's appointment
 - Keep them home from school and all activities until your healthcare provider determines that if your teen has pertussis (preferably by laboratory testing).
 - If your healthcare provider determines that your teen has pertussis, it is important that your teen stay home from all activities until they have completed five days of recommended antibiotics.
 - If your teen has already been coughing for more than 21 days they are no longer contagious and will not need antibiotics to return to school and other activities. However, your teen may have spread pertussis to others during those 21 days.
2. **If your teen does NOT have a cough but they are or have close contact with someone who:**
 - is a household contact of someone diagnosed with pertussis
 - is pregnant in the third trimester, or
 - is less than 12 months of age, or
 - has a weakened immune system or lung problems (like severe asthma or cystic fibrosis) your child needs to be started on recommended antibiotics to prevent them from becoming ill. Ask your teen's healthcare provider to prescribe a recommended antibiotic for your teen as soon as possible to prevent pertussis.
3. If your teen does not meet the criteria listed above (they are not or do not have close contact with someone who is pregnant women, infants less than 12 months of age, and weakened immune system/lung problems), they do not need to receive antibiotics because of the pertussis exposure.

Please watch for signs of pertussis (such as a cough) for 21 days and call your healthcare provider if your teen starts coughing. At that time tell your health care provider that they were exposed to pertussis and take this letter to the doctor's appointment.

Please make sure your family's vaccinations for pertussis are up-to-date. If you need the Tdap vaccine, contact your healthcare provider, your local pharmacy or, for VFC eligible children, the Scott County Health Department at 563-326-8618.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Scott County Health Department Monday-Friday, 8:00-4:30 by calling 563-326-8618 and ask for Ann Jepson, RN, ext. 8878, Lashon Moore, ARNP, ext. 8544 or Roma Taylor RN, BSN ext. 8826.



April 18, 2017

Dear Doctor:

Your patient was exposed to pertussis. The national guideline summary is below.

If your patient does not have symptoms of pertussis but meets one or more of the following criteria, we recommend antibiotic prophylaxis:

- Your patient is a household contact to a confirmed pertussis case.
- Your patient is or has ongoing close contact with a woman who is pregnant in her third trimester.
- Your patient is or has ongoing close contact with an infant less than 12 months old.
- Your patient is or has ongoing close contact with a person with pre-existing health conditions that may be exacerbated by a pertussis infection (such as immunocompromised persons and patients with moderate to severe medically treated asthma).

If your patient does not meet any of the criteria listed above, antibiotic prophylaxis is not recommended. However, please educate your patient on how to watch for signs and symptoms.

If your patient has symptoms of pertussis:

If your patient has been coughing for less than 21 days:

1. Collect nasopharyngeal swabs, nasal aspirate, or nasal wash for pertussis PCR testing and send the specimens to the State Hygienic Laboratory for testing.
2. Do not delay treatment with appropriate antibiotics while waiting for laboratory results if there is if no alternative diagnosis.
3. Document and communicate all clinical decisions related to pertussis to Scott County Health Department (this includes children for whom pertussis has been ruled out) so that appropriate public health action can continue to be taken.
4. Strongly consider antibiotic prophylaxis for all household members, this is especially important if a pregnant woman, an infant less than 12 months old, or anyone with pre-existing health conditions that may be exacerbated by a pertussis infection lives in the household.

If your patient has been coughing for 21 days or more:

1. Testing for pertussis is not recommended as the infection has resolved even though the symptoms may continue for weeks due to damage done by the infection. Testing after 3 weeks of cough is of limited benefit since PCR and culture are only sensitive during the first 2-3 weeks of cough when bacterial DNA is still present in the nasopharynx.
2. Treatment is generally no longer necessary after 21 days. However, because they are at higher risk of severe disease, infants or pregnant women in their third trimester could be treated up through 6 weeks after cough onset.
3. The patient is no longer infectious and can return to work/school/childcare and other activities.
4. **For all households:** Please make sure that all pertussis vaccinations are up to date for all household members or refer for vaccination. Additional clinical and laboratory guidance may be found on the IDPH website: <http://idph.iowa.gov/cade/disease-information/pertussis>

Should you have any questions or concerns, please call the **Scott County Health Department** Monday-Friday, 8:00-4:30 by calling **563-326-8618** and ask for Ann Jepson RN, ext. **8878**, Lashon Moore, ARNP, ext. 8544 or Roma Taylor RN, BSN ext. 8826.

What is pertussis (whooping cough)?

Pertussis is a disease caused by bacteria. It causes severe spells of coughing. These spells can interfere with eating, drinking and breathing. Pertussis can lead to pneumonia, convulsions, inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) and sometimes death.

Who can get pertussis?

Pertussis can occur at any age. It is most common in infants less than one year old, but anyone can get it. Pertussis can be hard to diagnose in teens and adults because their symptoms often look like a cold with a nagging cough.

How is pertussis spread?

Pertussis is spread through the air after an infected person coughs or sneezes. Other people breathe in infected droplets.

What are the symptoms of pertussis?

Pertussis starts like a cold with symptoms of runny nose and an irritating cough. Within one to two weeks the cough develops into coughing fits. The fits are a series of violent coughs during which the victim struggles for breath. A gasping for air, which produces a high-pitched whooping sound, follows the coughing. The coughing fits occur more frequently at night, and are often followed by vomiting. Between spells, the person usually appears to be well. Adults, teens, and vaccinated children may have milder symptoms.

How long is an infected person able to spread pertussis?

Without treatment an infected person can spread the disease from the time he or she starts coughing until 21 days after the start of the cough. After five days of treatment with an appropriate antibiotic, an infected person cannot spread the disease.

Can a person get pertussis again?

Yes.

How is pertussis diagnosed?

A doctor may think a patient has pertussis because of the symptoms, but a sample of mucus must be taken from the back of the nose for testing. This sample is then sent for testing to determine whether the patient has pertussis.

What is the treatment for pertussis?

Treatment with an appropriate antibiotic may help if given early in the illness. Other treatments such as fluids, oxygen, and mild sedation may help the child during the prolonged period of severe coughing.

Should people who have been around a person with pertussis be treated?

People with symptoms should see their healthcare provider.

Even without symptoms, all household contacts and other close contacts determined to be at high risk for severe pertussis or in contact with someone at high risk and who don't have symptoms should receive postexposure prophylaxis (PEP), regardless of age or vaccine status.

Vaccination status should be assessed.

How can pertussis be prevented?

Pertussis may be prevented through routine immunization. Pertussis is spread through the air after an infected person coughs or sneezes. Other people breathe in infected droplets. Cover your mouth when you cough, stay away from others when they are coughing, wash your hands frequently. Ask your health care clinician/local public health department about vaccine for adolescents/adults.

Where is pertussis vaccine available?

All county health departments in Iowa give this vaccine. You may also check with your private health care provider.

Where can you get more information?

- Your doctor or nurse, your local health department (listed in the telephone book under local government).
- Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Disease Prevention and Immunization, (800) 831-6293.