

Avon Lake City Schools

175 Avon Belden Road
Avon Lake, Ohio 44012



PERTUSSIS – WHOOPING COUGH

What is pertussis?

Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by the bacteria, *Bordetella pertussis*.

Who gets pertussis?

Pertussis can occur at any age. Most of the reported cases are in children under five years, however the number of cases in adolescents and adults is increasing. Adolescents, adults and those partially protected by the vaccine may have milder disease which is not diagnosed as pertussis.

How is pertussis spread?

Pertussis is spread from person to person from tiny droplets containing the bacteria when they talk, cough, or sneeze.

What are the symptoms of pertussis?

It often starts like a common cold, with runny nose, slight fever, and cough which worsens over 1-2 weeks and can last 1-2 months. People with pertussis may experience continuous coughing spells in rapid succession and can sometimes be followed by vomiting.

How soon after infection do symptoms appear?

The incubation period is usually 7-10 days, with a range of 4 to 21 days.

When and for how long is a person able to spread pertussis?

A person can transmit pertussis from the onset of symptoms to three weeks after the onset of coughing episodes. The period of communicability can be reduced to five days after appropriate antibiotic therapy is begun. The spread of pertussis can be minimized by covering coughs with a tissue, washing hands with soap and water after coughing or sneezing, and keeping your child home when he/she is sick. Infants and very young children, not fully immunized are at most risk for severe illness from pertussis infection.

What is the vaccine for pertussis?

Children should be immunized with the DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis) vaccine at 2, 4, 6, and 15 to 18 months and again between 4 and 6 years of age. The vaccine becomes less effective as children get older, and vaccinated children *can* become infected and spread it to others. **New immunization requirements now state that 1 booster of Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis) or Td (tetanus, diphtheria) vaccine must be administered prior to entry into 7th and 8th grade.** If you have ever experienced any complications from any vaccinations, please discuss this with your physician at your appointment.

If you would like further information it can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/about/index.html>

If you have any questions or would like to confirm your child's immunization status, please contact your physician or the nurse at your child's school.