



**HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**
of Northwest Michigan

Information on Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

November 24, 2014

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Whooping cough, also known by its medical name, Pertussis, was recently diagnosed in a member of our school. It is a highly contagious bacterial infection of the respiratory system that causes fits of severe coughing. Symptoms start with a runny nose, mild fever and mild cough, similar to a cold, but progress to severe spasms of coughing that can interfere with eating, drinking and breathing. Older children, adolescents, and adults often have milder symptoms than do infants and young children. Pertussis is spread by coughing and sneezing and is highly contagious.

Recommendations:

1. If your son/daughter has a cough:
 - Keep home from school and activities, including sports and work. See items 4 and 5 about when he/she can return to these activities.
 - Make an appointment with his/her doctor as soon as possible and tell the doctor that he/she may have been exposed to Pertussis.
2. If your son/daughter has been told by a doctor that he/she has a weakened immune system, ask the doctor to prescribe antibiotics to as soon as possible to prevent Pertussis. Antibiotics should be given to anyone with a weakened immune system if they may have been exposed to Pertussis, even if he or she is not coughing.
3. If your son/daughter lives with any of the following people and may have been exposed to Pertussis, ask the doctor to prescribe antibiotics as soon as possible to your son/daughter, even if he or she is not coughing:
 - A woman who is pregnant,
 - An infant younger than 12 months old, or
 - Anyone with a weakened immune system.
4. If your son/daughter has been diagnosed with Pertussis by his or her doctor:
 - Tell the school that he/she has been diagnosed with Pertussis.
 - School officials may request that your high schooler stay home from school and activities, including sports and work, until your son or daughter has been on antibiotics for five days to treat Pertussis.
 - Ask the doctor for a note that states your son/daughter has Pertussis.
5. If the doctor says your son/daughter does NOT have Pertussis:
 - Ask for a note from the doctor telling the school that your son/daughter's cough is NOT Pertussis and that he/she can return to school and other activities at any time.

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231 547 6238 - fax

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Bellaire, MI 49615
231 533 8670
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95 Livingston Blvd.
Gaylord, MI 49735
989 732 1794
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**Dental Clinics North
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220 W. Garfield Ave.
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**Hospice of Northwest
Michigan**
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**Northern Michigan
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www.nwhealth.org



Additionally, please ensure your student and family members are up to date on vaccinations. Starting at age 11 all children should receive a single dose of the Tdap vaccine that provides additional protection against Pertussis. If your adolescent has not yet received this Tdap, as well as any adult who has not received a Tdap booster, they should get the vaccination to reduce their risk of contracting or spreading Pertussis to others.

If you need the Tdap vaccine, contact your doctor or call to schedule an appointment:
Health Department of Northwest Michigan: (800) 432-4121

If you have a suspected case of Pertussis or any questions, please contact our Communicable Disease Staff at the number listed above.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.