



Date: December 20, 2012

Re: **Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Alert— (TSD Schools)**

Several students attending various Thompson School District Schools and local Charter Schools have been diagnosed with pertussis (also known as whooping cough) and may have been infectious and able to pass the infection on to other individuals. Ill students are treated with antibiotics to stop further spread of the infection and remain out of school until 5 days of antibiotic treatment has been completed.

The state of Colorado is experiencing an outbreak of pertussis cases. During January 1 through December 1, 2012, 1367 cases of pertussis have been reported. In comparison, an average of 258 cases per year was reported during this same time period 2007-2011.

Pertussis is a bacterial illness involving the respiratory tract that begins with cold-like symptoms and progresses to a severe cough. Some cases can have severe coughing spells which may cause vomiting, breathlessness, a change in facial color, and a whooping sound that follows the coughing fits. (Whooping is less common after infancy.) The illness can last from six to ten weeks. Disease symptoms vary with age and vaccination status, with milder illness generally seen among fully vaccinated persons.

Pertussis is spread through sneezing and coughing and contact with droplets from the respiratory tract of the person who is infected. It usually takes from 7-10 days for symptoms to appear after exposure to pertussis, but symptoms could appear from 4 to 21 days after exposure.

Our primary goal is to prevent pertussis in infants and very young children and anyone with a medical condition that would be complicated because of pertussis. Pertussis can be particularly severe in infants under 12 months of age and in persons with any chronic respiratory disease such as asthma.

Children are routinely immunized against pertussis with a series of three shots as infants, a booster dose at 15 to 18 months, and before school entry at four to six years of age. A vaccine (Tdap) for adolescents and adults is now available through health care providers or your local health department. The vaccine provides protection against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis and is highly recommended for health care personnel and those who have close contact with infants.

What to Do

- **If you, your child or other individuals you provide care for have a respiratory infection with a cough now or develops pertussis-like symptoms, do not expose others to the cough. Consult with your health care provider and inform him/her that there may have been an exposure to pertussis so that appropriate testing and treatment can be considered. This is especially true if you have children less than 1 year of age living or being cared for in your household.**
- **Consult with your health care provider or your local health department to ensure immunizations (DTaP/Tdap) of all members of your household are up to date. Vaccine is available from most private physicians or your County Health Department.**
- **Household members and those with close face-to-face contact with a known pertussis case can be treated preventively with appropriate antibiotics to stop further spread of the infection.**
- **Pertussis cases should stay home from daycare, school, or work until they have taken a prescribed antibiotic for 5 days.**
- **If you have questions about Pertussis, call your health care provider or the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment at 970-498-6700. The Larimer County Department of Health and Environment holds vaccination clinics at the Fort Collins office (1525 Blue Spruce) Monday 9:00-12:00 and 1:00 to 3:30; Tuesday 3:00-6:00 pm; Friday 9:00-12:00. Vaccination clinics are also held at the Loveland office (205 East 6th) Wednesday 3:00-6:00PM; Friday 9:00AM-12:00PM. Please call the Larimer County Health Department for further information. There are no clinics the first Wednesday of each month.**