

Pertussis Disease Alert
Important Notice to Parents
4/29/25

Your child may have been exposed to pertussis, also known as “whooping cough”, at Jefferson Academy Secondary School. Pertussis is an illness spread to others when an infected person sneezes or coughs. **Pertussis may be very severe** in infants and young children (especially those without 3 doses of pertussis vaccine).

Symptoms may appear 7 to 10 days after being in close contact with someone that has pertussis, but can take anywhere from 4 to 21 days. Pertussis begins with cold-like symptoms that may include:

- Runny nose
- Mild coughing
- Low-grade fever

After one to two weeks, coughing becomes more severe and develops into coughing fits (many, rapid coughs) that leave a person out of breath. These fits are often followed by a high-pitched “whooping” sound heard when a person inhales. Severe coughing fits can cause vomiting or changes in facial color. In between coughing fits, your child may look and feel fine.

Cough-like illnesses are common this year. If your child develops coughing fits, they should stay home from school until they have been seen by a health care provider. If you bring your child to the doctor, please show the reverse side of this letter to them. Students suspected of having pertussis should be tested (nasal swab or wash is preferred) and receive an appropriate antibiotic. Students diagnosed with pertussis may return to school after completing 5 days of antibiotics, even though they will likely continue to cough for many weeks.

If your child is coughing, tell your doctor who may want them to be tested and to receive a prescription antibiotic. Students diagnosed with pertussis must be kept home from school and should avoid crowded public places and contact with people at risk of severe disease (infants, pregnant women, people with severe medical conditions) until completing five days of an appropriate antibiotic.

The DTaP/Tdap vaccine protects against pertussis. Pertussis can occur in people who have been vaccinated because protection can wear off, but people who have been vaccinated typically do not get as sick as unvaccinated people.

The Health Department recommends the following:

- **Review the DTaP/Tdap vaccination records of everyone in your household and arrange for vaccination, if not up to date.**
- **Contact your child’s health care provider if they have a severe cough.**
- **If diagnosed with pertussis, your child should stay home from school until they have completed 5 days of antibiotics.**
- **Children with other respiratory illnesses should follow the school COVID-19 recommendations.**

If you have any questions please contact Dawn Kollmorgen, BSN-RN School Nurse Consultant