

Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

*Information provided by
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment*

Pertussis is a contagious illness that is spread when an infected person sneezes or coughs and another individual breathes in the bacteria. Symptoms of pertussis usually develop 7 to 10 days after exposure but can develop from 4 to 21 days after exposure.

Students and staff with a cough should inform their physician of the possible exposure to pertussis and be examined. If your physician suspects pertussis you should be tested (PCR is the preferred test) and receive an appropriate antibiotic for pertussis. Students or staff diagnosed with pertussis cannot return to school until completing five days of an appropriate antibiotic.

Pertussis begins with a cough that progressively becomes more severe until the person develops coughing fits. In between coughing fits, the individual may look and feel fine. Vomiting, breathlessness, a change in facial color, and/or a whooping sound may follow the coughing fits. **Pertussis may be very severe** in infants and young children (especially those without 3 doses of pertussis vaccine), resulting in hospitalization, seizures, long-term neurological problems, and even death. Pertussis can occur in immunized individuals, because the immunity gained from vaccination typically wanes by adolescence.

We recommend you review immunization records of all children, adolescents, and adults in your household to ensure they are up-to-date on their DTaP/Tdap shots. DTaP vaccine is administered to children less than 7 years of age. A single dose of Tdap vaccine is recommended for persons 11 to 64 years of age. Tdap vaccine was licensed in 2005 for use in adolescents and adults.

In summary, we recommend the following:

- **Contact your health care provider if you have a cough.**
- **If diagnosed with pertussis complete a course of an appropriate antibiotic for pertussis.**
- **Individuals diagnosed with pertussis will be excluded from school/child care until they have completed 5 days of an appropriate antibiotic.**
- **Review the DTaP/Tdap immunization records of all members of your household and arrange for vaccination if not up to date.**