



Sullivan County Public Health Services
PO Box 590, 50 Community Lane
Liberty, NY 12754
Phone: (845) 292-5910
Fax #: (845) 513-2276

January 28, 2016

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child may have been exposed to a second possible pertussis case (whooping cough). Pertussis is an infection that affects the airways and is easily spread from person to person by coughing or sneezing. Its severe cough can last for weeks or months, sometimes leading to coughing fits and/or vomiting. Anyone can get pertussis, but it can be very dangerous for babies and people with weakened immune systems. Family members with pertussis, especially brothers and sisters, as well as mothers and fathers, can spread pertussis to babies.

Recommendations:

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

Please make sure your family's vaccinations are up-to-date. Protection against pertussis from the childhood vaccine, DTaP, decreases over time. Older children and adults, including pregnant women, should get a pertussis booster shot called "Tdap" to help protect themselves and babies near or around them. If you need Tdap, contact your doctor for vaccination to help prevent future cases.

Sincerely,

Sullivan County Public Health Services, Epidemiology Department.

Your student may have been exposed to pertussis.

For Exposed Patients without Symptoms:

As a precaution to help protect vulnerable individuals, we are recommending antibiotic prophylaxis for this patient if he or she shares a household with a woman who is pregnant or an infant less than 12 months old. Alternatively, this patient is being referred to you because he or she has an immunodeficiency or lives with a person with an immunodeficiency and may require antibiotic prophylaxis to help prevent pertussis.

For Exposed Patients with Symptoms:

As Sullivan County Public Health continues to work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), we have developed the following guidelines for assessing and treating patients at this time:

For patients coughing < 21 days:

1. Collect nasopharyngeal swabs or aspirate for pertussis PCR testing and/or culture.
2. Do not delay treatment with appropriate antibiotics while waiting for laboratory results. If there is no alternative diagnosis.
3. Document and communicate all clinical decisions related to pertussis to the school (this includes children for whom pertussis has been ruled out).
4. Strongly consider antibiotic prophylaxis for all household members if a pregnant woman, an infant less than 12 months old, or anyone with a weakened immune system lives in the household.

For patients coughing \geq 21 days:

1. Testing for pertussis is not recommended. Testing after 3 weeks of cough is of limited benefit since PCR and culture are only sensitive during the first 2 to 3 weeks of cough when bacterial DNA is still present in the nasopharynx.
2. Treatment is no longer necessary after 21 days, with the following exception: infants and pregnant women in their third trimester should be treated up through 6 weeks after cough onset.
3. The patient is no longer infectious and can return to school.

For all households: Administer Tdap to contacts 11 years or older who have not been previously vaccinated with Tdap, DTaP to contacts 2 months through 6 years who are not up-to-date, or refer for vaccination.

Additional clinical and laboratory guidance may be found on the CDC website:
www.cdc.gov/pertussis

Should you have any questions or concerns, please call Sullivan County Public Health Services at 845.292-5910, ask for EPI office.

Sincerely,

Sullivan County Public Health Services, Epidemiology Department.