

Dear Mt Vernon School Community,

16 December 2019

This letter is to let you know that there have been additional cases of mild pertussis (also called whooping cough) in the Mt Vernon School District. Over the last 10 day there have been an additional 3 confirmed cases to bring the total to 23 cases since October. There have been no new cases reported to the school in the last 5 days. The public health departments are reaching out to each family with to provide information and guidance to the affected families and close contacts. All persons involved were fully vaccinated and have followed the guidance to remain out of school until completion of the five-day course of antibiotics. The Public Health Department and the school continue to work together and will continue to monitor any new cases.

The school appreciates that community members are seeking and following the care and advice of their health care providers for respiratory illnesses and that our medical community continues to test for pertussis so that new cases can be identified and treated. This also allows those individuals most at risk, to be aware and take individual precautions. We will continue to stay in touch with the public health department for guidance and direction. Updates will continue to be sent weekly to keep our community informed. You are encouraged to review the information again below as a reminder of important information pertaining to whooping cough.

Whooping cough is most concerning for individuals who have weakened immune systems, have severe asthma, are elderly or infants without full immunization. Women in their 3rd trimester of pregnancy are also considered higher risk as their newborn would not have immunization.

If you have concerns for your family please contact your health care provider for individual guidance.

As a reminder, please review the information below and contact one of the school nurses with questions or for additional information.

Pertussis (also called Whooping Cough)

Signs and Symptoms: Pertussis is a bacterial respiratory infection with a progressively irritating cough. The name whooping cough comes from the high pitched “whoop” sound when taking a breath in during a coughing spell. Milder cases, like we are experiencing here at school may not have the typical “whoop” sound as there may not be coughing spells. Anyone can get pertussis, but the symptoms are much more severe and can be dangerous for infants, people with weakened immune systems or those with lung problems.

Diagnosis: Pertussis is diagnosed with a nasal swab at the doctor’s office.

Transmission: (how it is spread): Pertussis is spread through direct contact with respiratory droplets from coughing and sneezing and being in very close contact for extended time. The average time from being exposed to the bacteria to developing symptoms is 9-10 days.

Treatment and management: Pertussis is treated with a course of antibiotics. A person is considered non-infectious after the 5-day course of antibiotics is completed or if they have had the cough for more than 21 days.

Prevention: Basic prevention against pertussis is provided by childhood vaccines. This protection can decrease over time. Therefore, a booster Tdap (tetanus diphtheria and pertussis) is required for 7th grade and recommended for any adult who has not yet had it. Pregnant women should get a Tdap during each pregnancy as it provides some protection for the baby when it is born. If you have questions about the vaccine please contact your health care provider, public health or your school nurse. Respiratory infections can also be prevented with good respiratory hygiene such as covering coughs and sneezing, frequent hand washing, avoiding touching the face, keeping your immune system strong and staying home when ill.

Additional Information about pertussis can be found at the [CDC website](#) . We also encourage you to visit the [school nurse webpage](#) on a regular basis for health information and updates.

Linda See
School Nurse