

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



STEVE LEVY
SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE

JAMES L. TOMARKEN, MD
MSW, MPH, MBA, FRCPC, FACP
Commissioner

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

Dear Parents,

December 2, 2011

This letter is to inform you that we have a new case of Pertussis at Longwood Junior High School. Suffolk County has seen an increase in Pertussis, a respiratory disease also known as “whooping cough”. The disease is a highly contagious bacterial respiratory illness that is spread through the air by cough from an infected individual. A person with Pertussis is infectious for 21 days from the start of the cough, or until he/ she has been on 5 full days of appropriate antibiotic therapy. Children and adults may be susceptible and still develop Pertussis even if they are up-to-date with their vaccinations as immunity to Pertussis wanes over the years. Pertussis illness is particularly dangerous and can be fatal to infants who are not fully immunized. Pertussis in infants may present with atypical symptoms, and older children and adults may present with milder symptoms, particularly if previously immunized. There are 3 stages of Pertussis infection:

Stage 1: Mild upper respiratory symptoms, possible low-grade fever, slight cough, lasts 1-2 weeks.

Stage 2: Spasmodic coughing episodes sometimes followed by long whooping sounds and /or vomiting/gagging and facial color changes. This stage lasts up to 6 weeks.

Stage 3: Gradual recovery, coughing episodes may persist for weeks to months. Coughing episodes may return with other respiratory infections or exercise.

Once a susceptible individual is exposed to Pertussis, it may take up to 21 days for symptoms to develop. Incubation may be longer in immunocompromised individuals. If you observe these symptoms in your child, contact your provider and request that your child be tested for Pertussis with a special nasal-throat swab. This test can be performed in the doctor's office or hospital emergency room (please call in advance to advise medical staff of the child's respiratory symptoms). **Early treatment with the appropriate antibiotic for the symptomatic child, his asymptomatic (not currently showing symptoms) family and close contacts, will eliminate disease transmission and may reduce disease severity in the child.** Please note: If your child's physician suspects a diagnosis of Pertussis, orders testing and prescribes antibiotics, your child should remain home until they have completed at least five days of their antibiotic therapy or the test results are negative.

A Pertussis containing vaccine (Tdap) which can provide some protection is now available from your physician for those ages 10 years through adult. You may also visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov for more information about Pertussis. Please call clinical staff at the Division of Public Health at 631-853-3055 if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Dennis Russo, M.D.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH
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