

**KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT  
HEALTH SERVICES**

**PERTUSSIS  
(Whooping Cough)**

Date 3-23-16

Dear Parent/Guardian

Pertussis, also known as Whooping Cough, has recently been reported in our schools.

**WHAT IS PERTUSSIS**

Pertussis is an acute bacterial infection. It is spread through respiratory secretions and is highly contagious. Humans are the only known host.

The incubation period for Pertussis is usually 7-10 days with a range of 5-21 days. Pertussis is seen in people of all ages but is most serious in babies under 1 year of age. Adolescents and adults with Pertussis usually have a much milder form and, unaware of what they have, can unintentionally spread the illness to others, including unimmunized children.

**SYMPTOMS**

Pertussis begins with coldlike symptoms (i.e. runny nose, mild coughing, and sometimes a mild fever). It is almost impossible to distinguish from the common cold. This stage lasts 1 to 2 weeks and is the time when the person is most contagious.

During the second and most serious stage the coldlike symptoms fade but the cough worsens. Repeated coughing makes it difficult to catch ones' breath. Paroxysms (fits) of coughing sometimes produce a 'whoop' sound. After the paroxysm of coughing there may be vomiting and the person may be exhausted. People with less severe illness may not have the 'whoop' part of the cough. This lasts from 2-4 weeks or more.

In the final stage the person begins to recover although the cough may continue on and off for weeks to months. The full length of uncomplicated cases is approximately 6-10 weeks.

**PREVENTION and TREATMENT**

Childhood immunization is the most effective way to prevent Pertussis. Children should have 5 doses of DTaP or be within the recommended scheduling of doses for their age.

Pertussis is confirmed through a positive laboratory culture or an epidemiological link to such a culture. Pertussis may be suspected with paroxysms of coughing, inspiratory 'whoop' or vomiting after coughing, or contact with someone diagnosed with Pertussis.

Antibiotics are recommended primarily to limit the spread of the illness. The child should not return to school nor an adult to work until the course of antibiotics is completed. Those individuals who are not treated should not attend school or work for at least 21 days after the onset of the cough.

If Pertussis is suspected, the individual should be evaluated by a healthcare professional. Pregnant women should also contact their healthcare provider.

*Nause Sherie*