



## WASHINGTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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**TO:** All Washington County Residents

**NOTICE:** The number of pertussis (whooping cough) cases identified throughout Washington County continues to increase. Since May 1st, over 100 confirmed cases have been reported to Washington County Health Department. Please become familiar with the signs and symptoms and closely monitor yourselves and your child(ren).

**WHAT IS PERTUSSIS:** A highly contagious disease that is spread through the air by coughing. It is caused by *Bordetella pertussis* bacteria.

**EXCLUSION from Childcare/School/Work/Summer Camps/Recreational Programs:** Anyone experiencing symptoms of pertussis should stay home and contact his/her healthcare provider. Persons with symptoms of pertussis should be excluded/stay home until one or more of the following:

- (a) Negative test results, indicating the person does not have pertussis;
- (b) Completion of five (5) full days of antibiotics; or
- (c) It has been more than twenty-one (21) days since the cough started.

These guidelines are provided by the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Centers for Disease and Control (CDC). ([http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/immunization/pdf/pertussis\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/immunization/pdf/pertussis_guidelines.pdf))

**SYMPTOMS:** Begins with a runny nose, sneezing, mild cough, and possibly a low-grade fever. The cough may occur in sudden, uncontrollable bursts, sometimes ending with high-pitched whooping sounds and/or vomiting.

**SPREAD:** When a person with pertussis coughs, tiny droplets with pertussis bacteria go into the air. People within close contact may breathe in these droplets. Pertussis is most likely to be spread in the early stages of cough.

**INCUBATION:** Once exposed to pertussis, symptoms may take 1 to 3 weeks to appear.

**CONTAGIOUS PERIOD:** Infected persons may be able to spread it to others 1 week before cough onset and for up to 3 weeks after the start of their cough, unless they are treated with certain antibiotics.

**DIAGNOSIS:** To confirm a diagnosis of pertussis, laboratory tests are performed on material collected by placing a flexible swab through the nostril to the back of the nose and throat. Testing is recommended, regardless of immunization status, whenever a person has symptoms of pertussis and has been in contact with a confirmed case.

**TREATMENT:** Persons with pertussis can be treated with antibiotics to decrease the possibility of spreading the disease. However, antibiotics may do little to lessen the symptoms. Treatment is most effective if started soon after cough begins.

**PREVENTION/CONTROL:** Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or cough/sneeze into your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with secretions from the nose or mouth.

**HAND WASHING is the best way to prevent spread of communicable diseases:** Preventive treatment with antibiotics is recommended for people who have been in close contact with pertussis. Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled.

**IMMUNIZATION: Being up to date on immunizations is essential in controlling outbreaks.** Children 15 months or older should have at least 4 doses of DTaP (diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis). Tdap (tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis) is recommended for older children and adults. For the current school year it is required for all children entering 6th thru 12th grades. **It is recommended that parents/caregivers of infants receive one dose of Tdap** which is available at both the Washington County Health Department and your healthcare provider.

Please contact your local health department or your medical provider if you have any questions.