

11/15/2024

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child may have been exposed to whooping cough (pertussis) on 11/04/2024. Recently, Spokane Regional Health District has seen an increased number of whooping cough cases in Spokane County. Whooping cough is an infection that affects the airways and can easily spread from person to person by coughing or sneezing. Whooping cough can cause a severe cough that lasts for weeks or months, sometimes leading to coughing fits or vomiting. Anyone can get whooping cough, but it can be very dangerous for babies and people with certain health conditions.

Recommendations:

1. If your child has a cough:

- Keep your child home from school and activities, such as sports or playgroups. See items 4 and 5 about when your child can return to these activities.
- Make an appointment with your child's healthcare provider as soon as possible and tell them that your child may have been exposed to whooping cough.

2. If your child has a health condition that may be worse with whooping cough, such as asthma, ask your child's healthcare provider to prescribe antibiotics to your child as soon as possible to prevent whooping cough. Healthcare providers should give antibiotics to a child with certain health conditions if they may have been exposed to whooping cough, even if they are not coughing.

3. If your child lives with any of the following people, ask your child's healthcare provider to prescribe antibiotics as soon as possible to your child, even if they are not coughing:

- A person who is pregnant
- A baby younger than 12 months old
- Anyone with health conditions that may be worse with whooping cough, such as asthma

4. If your child has been diagnosed with whooping cough by their healthcare provider:

- Tell the school that a healthcare provider diagnosed your child with whooping cough.
- School officials may request that you keep your child home from school and activities, such as sports or playgroups, until your child has been on appropriate antibiotics for five days.
- Ask your child's healthcare provider for a note that states your child has whooping cough.

5. If your child's healthcare provider says your child does NOT have whooping cough:

- Ask for a note from the healthcare provider telling the school that your child's cough is NOT whooping cough and that your child can return to school and other activities at any time.

Please make sure your family's whooping cough vaccinations are up to date. If you take your child to a healthcare provider for a cough, please show the reverse side of this letter to them. If you have any questions about whooping cough, please talk to your healthcare provider or contact the Spokane Regional Health District's Disease Prevention and Response division at 509.324.1442.

11/15/2024

Dear Healthcare Provider,

Your patient 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 they share a household with a person who is pregnant or an infant less than 12 months old. Alternatively, we are referring this patient to you because they or someone they live with may be immunocompromised and may require antibiotic prophylaxis to help prevent pertussis.

For Exposed Patients with Symptoms:

For patients coughing less than 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 you have ruled out pertussis).
4. Strongly consider antibiotic prophylaxis for all household members if a pregnant person, an infant less than 12 months old, or an immunocompromised person lives in the household.

For patients coughing 21 days or more:

1. Laboratory testing for pertussis is not necessary. CDC does not recommend laboratory testing after 3 weeks of cough 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. For most patients, antibiotic treatment is not required. Antibiotics are no longer necessary after 21 days of cough, with the following exception: you should treat infants and pregnant persons in their third trimester up through 6 weeks after cough onset.
3. The patient is no longer infectious and can return to school.

For all households: Ensure everyone is up to date with their pertussis vaccination. For those who aren't, either administer the appropriate vaccine or refer them to [insert contact] for vaccination.

You can find [additional clinical and laboratory guidance](#) on the CDC website.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Spokane Regional Health District's Disease Prevention and Response division at 509.324.1442.

Sincerely,

Communicable Disease Epidemiology Program
Spokane Regional Health District