

January 18, 2018

To: Kimberly School District

Subject: Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

A student in the Kimberly School District has been diagnosed with Pertussis (whooping cough). Pertussis is a very serious disease. **Here is what South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) would like you to know:**

- One person has been diagnosed with pertussis.
- Students and teachers are recommended to watch for symptoms and update their immunizations if they are not current with a pertussis-containing vaccine.

#### **What are symptoms of pertussis?**

Symptoms of pertussis include a persistent cough. Usually the cough occurs in explosive bursts ending with the typical high-pitched whoop and, occasionally, vomiting. Between bursts of coughing, the person appears well. Coughing attacks continue for four to six weeks. Older children or adults may have less severe symptoms. Pertussis is frequently complicated by pneumonia and ear infections, particularly in infants. Death from pertussis is rare.

#### **If someone has symptoms, what should they do?**

If you or your child develops a persistent cough, even if you have been immunized, please stay at home and consult your doctor for diagnosis and treatment. Children with symptoms of pertussis should not attend school until seen by a physician.

#### **How long after I am in contact with the disease could I show symptoms?**

Symptoms usually develop within two weeks of contact with a case of pertussis.

#### **How is it spread?**

Pertussis is spread by contact with droplets in the air from coughing or sneezing. Persons who are in close contact with a case of pertussis (such as family members or close friends) are more likely to become ill.

#### **Is there a vaccine?**

Children should receive Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (DTaP) vaccine beginning at two months of age. By the time of school entry, most children receive five doses of DTP vaccine. A single dose of a similar vaccine called Tdap is recommended for people ages 11-64. Protection from the vaccine may decline throughout a person's life. Older children and adults may be able to develop the disease even if they have been vaccinated. Disease in persons who have been immunized is usually less severe. Antibiotics may be given to try to prevent this disease in people who have been exposed. Antibiotics are usually only given to family members living in the same household with a case of pertussis or contacts with other severe medical conditions.



## South Central Public Health District

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### How long is a person contagious with this disease?

Infected persons who do not receive antibiotic are contagious from the early coughing stage to three weeks after the beginning of coughing fits. Children treated with Zithromax or Erythromycin are contagious for the first five days on the medication. Children may return to school or daycare after five days of antibiotic therapy.

### Who can I call for more information?

For further information, or to arrange testing, please call Tanis Maxwell at 208-737-5971. Please call your local public health district office or your physician before taking a child in for testing. Special arrangements can be made to prevent spread to others at the time of testing.

Sincerely,

Cheryle Becker, RN  
FACH Division Administrator