



Dickinson-Iron District Health Department

Dickinson County

818 Pyle Drive, Kingsford, MI 49802
Ph: (906) 774-1868 Fax: (906) 774-9910
BRANCH OFFICE

www.didhd.org

Iron County

601 Washington Avenue, Iron River, MI 49935
Ph: (906) 265-9913 Fax: (906) 265-2950
MAIN OFFICE

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Dear Parents:

A child attending the Breitung Township School District was recently diagnosed with pertussis (whooping cough). Pertussis is easily spread and cases have been occurring across many counties in Michigan. Unfortunately, it can be up to three weeks between the time someone becomes infected with pertussis and the time they actually develop symptoms, so new cases may arise locally over the coming weeks.

Pertussis usually begins with mild upper respiratory symptoms, such as runny nose and mild cough, with little or no fever. It then progresses to a more severe cough, with spasms of coughing which may cause vomiting. Some, but not all individuals, will actually make a whooping sound as they take a breath between coughing spasms. This is how pertussis came to be called "whooping cough." Antibiotics are used to help decrease contagiousness in people with pertussis and can be used to help prevent infection in close contacts, but they do not "cure" the illness and symptoms may last for 6 to 10 weeks. Pertussis can cause particularly severe illness in infants.

This is a good opportunity to remind you about steps you can take to protect your family:

- **Make sure everyone in your household is up to date on their pertussis vaccinations.**
In infancy and early childhood, most children receive a primary series of vaccines to prevent pertussis. These are typically given at 2, 4, 6 and 12-15 months of age, with a first booster dose at 4-6 years of age. Unfortunately, immunity from this primary series fades with time and a booster vaccine is now recommended for all children at 11 years of age or once for people over 11 years of age, who have not received this particular vaccine in the past.. The vaccine is called Tdap and is similar to the primary series of DTaP vaccines that children receive early on. Tdap is intended for older children and adults and protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. In fact, schools in Michigan now require one dose of Tdap for children 11 years of age or older upon entry into 7th grade or higher. After this one time boost with pertussis-containing vaccine, regular tetanus boosters are recommended every 10 years for most individuals.
- **Take your child to the doctor if s/he has the symptoms described above.** Please do not send your child to school with a significant or prolonged cough, until they have been evaluated by a healthcare provider.
- **Call your healthcare provider or the health department at the number above, if you have questions or concerns.**

Sincerely,

Terry Frankovich

Teresa L. Frankovich, M.D., M.P.H

Medical Director, Dickinson-Iron District Health Department