



COUNTY OF ONONDAGA HEALTH DEPARTMENT

NICHOLAS J. PIRRO  
County Executive

John H. Mulroy Civic Center  
421 Montgomery Street  
Syracuse, New York 13202  
315-435-3155 - phone  
315-435-5720 - fax

CYNTHIA B. MORROW, MD, MPH  
Commissioner of Health

To: All Onondaga School District Families  
Date: November 30, 2006  
Re: Pertussis

This letter is to inform you of that there has been an increase in the number of cases of pertussis, or "whooping cough" in children in daycare facilities, school-aged children and adults in Onondaga County this fall. As many of you are aware, in 2003- 2004 Onondaga County experienced a large increase in the number of cases of pertussis. While the numbers this year are still well below the outbreak experienced in 2003-2004, the health department is closely monitoring the trends. No epidemiological linkage among school districts has been identified at this time.

**FACTS ABOUT PERTUSSIS:**

Pertussis is a severe coughing illness that can last for three months. The disease is spread by respiratory droplets or contact with respiratory secretions in the first three weeks of illness. People of all ages can get pertussis but it is especially dangerous to young infants.

Pertussis should be treated with antibiotics. Antibiotics kill the bacteria and stop the spread of pertussis, but do not change the outcome or the length of the illness. People who are concerned that they might have pertussis should talk with their health care providers.

There are three main ways to help stop the pertussis outbreak in a community:

- Make sure that everyone is up-to-date on vaccinations,
- Early diagnosis and antibiotic treatment of people who have the disease- children who are being treated may NOT return to school until they have completed 5 days of appropriate antibiotics
- Treat close contacts of sick individuals with the right antibiotics.

It is important to know that adolescents and adults can get infected with this bacteria and are often found to have spread the disease to children with whom they have close contact. Unfortunately, some of these young children may not have received complete series of DTaP vaccine and can get very ill from pertussis.

**SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Onondaga County Health Department (OCHD), in conjunction with the New York State Department of Health, is issuing these recommendations:

**For Students Aged 10 – 18, Their Families, and School Staff:**

In order to provide the maximum protection to students, their families, and school staff in all Onondaga school districts, the OCHD recommends that all students aged 10 – 18 and all adults through age 64 consider being vaccinated once against pertussis. For fall 2007, a new Federal and NYSDOH requirement is that children entering 6<sup>th</sup> grade (11 to 12 years of age, born on or after January 1, 1994)

receive 1 dose of tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis vaccine if they have completed the recommended childhood DTP/DTaP vaccination series and have not received Td or Tdap.

There are two recently licensed vaccine products, both known as Tdap, that provide protection against pertussis, tetanus, and diphtheria.. **Boostrix** is licensed for preteens and adolescents (ages 10 – 18) and **Adacel** is licensed for individuals aged 11 – 64 years.

Only one dose of Tdap is needed to boost immunity to protect against pertussis, and it can be given 2 years after the last tetanus-containing vaccine.

Contact your health care provider for an appointment to receive the Tdap vaccination. Parents of children aged 10 – 18 that do not have a health care provider or are under- or uninsured may call the OCHD at (315) 435-3287 for information about public health immunization clinics for children.

#### **For Day Care through Elementary School Students Less than 7 Years of Age:**

Infants may receive the DTaP (the vaccine approved for use up through age 6 years) as early as 6 weeks of age. Ask your infant's health care provider whether your infant may receive the DTaP vaccination at age 6 weeks instead of at age 8 weeks. Be sure that only healthy individuals are around your infant under 2 months of age. To protect newborns who cannot be vaccinated against pertussis, all eligible family members should be vaccinated to provide a pertussis-free home environment for the baby.

DTaP should be given at 2, 4, 6, and 12 – 15 months of age, and then once again between the ages of 4 and 6 years, before school entry. The OCHD recommends that you check your children's records or health care providers to be certain that they are up-to-date with their shots.

There is no vaccine currently licensed for children aged 7 through 9 years, however their childhood DTaP vaccines should continue to give them protection.

#### **Pertussis Prevention for Everyone:**

**Anyone who thinks that he/she may have pertussis (if they have a bad cough) should stay at home and contact a health care provider for a medical evaluation.** A special nose swab test will probably be done, and appropriate antibiotic may be prescribed. Be sure that anyone who is coughing stays at home, out of school, work, or camp, and away from friends and extended family, until five days of the antibiotic are completed.

**In order to minimize the spread of disease in the Onondaga School Districts, the OCHD recommends the following for those exposed to someone with pertussis:**

For all intimate contacts (persons who have face-to-face contact within a 3-foot radius with someone who has pertussis or persons who hug, kiss, share food or drink with someone with pertussis): Preventive antibiotic treatment **IS** recommended. Contacts who do not have any symptoms and who receive prophylaxis can still go to work, school, or daycare.

For casual contacts (persons in the same room with someone who has pertussis but with NO close contact): Preventive antibiotic treatment is **NOT** recommended.

For further information about pertussis, call Debra Dolan, RN or Vicki Wallace, RN , or Lisa MacDougal at the Onondaga County Health Department at 435-3236.