



September 8, 2015

Dear Parents/Guardians and School Staff:

A pertussis (whooping cough) outbreak has been ongoing in the Alberta Health Services Central Zone since December, 2014. Pertussis is a contagious disease that typically is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes near another individual.

The pertussis vaccine, which protects against the illness, is part of the routine childhood immunization series in Alberta. Children are offered vaccine as part of their regular immunizations at 2/4/6/18 months, preschool and grade 9. It is unusual but still possible for an individual that has received the pertussis vaccine to develop pertussis.

Pertussis vaccine is also recommended for all adults who have not received a dose over the age of 18. **During an outbreak, all pregnant women in their third trimester of pregnancy (over 26 weeks) are recommended to receive a dose of vaccine** to protect their babies even if they have previously had an adult dose.

Last year we saw many cases where pertussis infection was spread through school contacts, and we expect that we may see similar spread of infection in schools this year.

Please be alert for the following symptoms:

1. Persistent cough;
2. Spasms of coughing which are followed by a characteristic "whoop" sound, which may increase in frequency at night;
3. Coughing followed by gagging or vomiting.

If school staff or school children exhibit any of these symptoms, please visit your Family Doctor as soon as possible. Individuals diagnosed with Pertussis may not return to school or work and should avoid public gatherings, infants and pregnant women for 5 days after the start of appropriate antibiotic treatment.

More information regarding Pertussis can be found at:

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=hw65653>

**If you or your children have not been completely immunized against pertussis, we recommend immunization as soon as possible. Contact the Public Health Office in your area for immunization history and/or to make an appointment. At this appointment you/your children can also receive other age appropriate immunizations, such as Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccine.**

The above recommendations are meant to reduce the spread of the disease and protect babies and under-immunized young children in whom the disease can be very serious.

For more information, please call Health Link at 811.

Sincerely,

Dr. Deena Hinshaw  
Medical Officer of Health  
Alberta Health Services, Central Zone