



**Huntingdon Area School District**  
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Phone: 814-643-4140

November 22, 2024

Dear High School and Middle School Families:

It has come to our attention that the local Department of Health has confirmed at least one case of pertussis (whooping cough) at the High School and Middle School. This correspondence aims to proactively share information about pertussis and prevention for our students.

Pertussis is a highly contagious disease that spreads through the air when an infected person sneezes or coughs. Pertussis begins with cold symptoms and a cough that worsens over 1-2 weeks. Symptoms usually include long coughs (“coughing fits”) followed by a whooping noise. However, older children, adults, and young infants may not develop the whoop. People with pertussis may have a series of coughs followed by vomiting, turning blue, or difficulty catching their breath. The cough is often worse at night, and cough medicines usually do not help alleviate the cough. Please refer to the enclosed fact sheet for more information on pertussis.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health strongly recommends that if your child exhibits the systems mentioned above, promptly contact your child’s doctor to be evaluated. Explain to the Doctor, your child’s school has a confirmed case. Your child’s doctor may obtain a nasopharyngeal culture to test for pertussis.

Treatment for pertussis includes an antibiotic to help lower the chance of spreading the disease to others. Follow your doctor’s orders, but often, a child can return to school after completing the first five days of the medication. If your child is diagnosed with pertussis, all household members and other close contacts should also be treated with antibiotics regardless of age or vaccination status.

Making sure that children receive all their shots on time is the best way to control pertussis in the future. In children, diphtheria, tetanus, and acellular pertussis vaccine (DTaP) is only given to those under age 7. Children should receive one dose of DTaP vaccine at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, and between 15-18 months. In addition, one dose is needed before starting school (on or after the 4th birthday). The combination tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis vaccine (Tdap) is recommended for children ages 7 through 10 (if not fully vaccinated) and adolescents and adults as a one-time dose.

If you or your doctor has a question about pertussis, please call the Pennsylvania Department of Health at 1-877-PA-HEALTH or your local health department.

Thank you,

*Jennifer Mitchell*

Jennifer Mitchell  
Huntingdon Area School District  
Superintendent