



## Human Services

10 Sunnybrook Rd · P.O. Box 14049 · Raleigh, NC 27620-4049  
[www.WakeGOV.com](http://www.WakeGOV.com)

Date: Monday, January 8, 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian(s):

Some students and staff at your child's school may have been around a person who has pertussis (also known as whooping cough). Pertussis causes coughing that can last for weeks to months. Sometimes the cough can sound like a whoop as the person tries to catch their breath.

Early symptoms can last for 1 to 2 weeks and often include:

- Runny nose
- Low fever
- Coughing that gets worse over time
- Apnea — a pause in breathing in babies

Pertussis is a serious illness for babies and people with weak immune systems (who have cancer, had an organ transplant or take drugs that make it hard for them to fight diseases).

You should call your child's doctor if:

1. your child has a weak immune system, asthma or other breathing problem or a long term health problem
2. If your child lives with or spends time with any of these people:
  - A woman in her last 3 months of pregnancy,
  - A baby less than 12 months old, or
  - A person with a weak immune system or other long term health problem.

If you take your child to the doctor, please show the other side of this letter to your child's doctor when you go.

**If you have any questions, please call the Wake County Health Department at 919-250-4462.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kimberly W. McDonald, MD'.

Kimberly McDonald, MD, MPH  
Medical Director, Wake County Human Services

**Si no puede leer esta carta en inglés, llame al 919-250-4462 para información importante sobre la salud de su hijo(a).**

## Information for the Doctor

Dear Colleague:

Your patient may have been exposed to pertussis. Wake County Public Health recommends following these guidelines for assessing and treating exposed patients at this time:

### For all households

Administer Tdap vaccine to contacts 11 years and older who have not been previously vaccinated with Tdap, or refer for vaccination. (Wake County Health Department, Immunization Clinic at 919-250-3900)

### For Exposed Patients without Symptoms

- As a precaution to protect vulnerable individuals, we are recommending antibiotic prophylaxis for this patient if he or she *shares a household with a woman who is pregnant or an infant less than 12 months old*.
- Alternatively, this patient is being referred to you because he or she has an immunodeficiency or lives with a person with an immunodeficiency and may need antibiotic prophylaxis to help prevent pertussis.

### For Exposed Patients with Symptoms:

#### Patients coughing <21 days

- Collect nasopharyngeal swabs or aspirate for pertussis PCR testing and/or culture.
- Do not delay treatment with appropriate antibiotics while waiting for laboratory results if there is if no alternative diagnosis.
- Strongly consider antibiotic prophylaxis for all household members if a pregnant woman, an infant less than 12 months old, or anyone with a weakened immune system lives in the household.

#### Patients coughing ≥21 days

- The patient is no longer infectious and can return to school.
- Testing for pertussis is not recommended. Testing after 3 weeks of cough is of limited benefit since PCR and culture are only sensitive during the first 2-3 weeks of cough when bacterial DNA is still present in the nasopharynx.
- Treatment is no longer necessary after 21 days, **with the following exception:** infants and pregnant women in their third trimester should be treated up through 6 weeks after cough onset.

Additional clinical and laboratory guidance may be found on the CDC website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis>. Should you have any questions or concerns, please call the Communicable Disease Program at 919-250-4462.

Sincerely,

Kimberly McDonald, MD, MPH  
Medical Director, WCHS