



Information about Pertussis for Teachers and School Staff

Every year we see a few students in our schools who are diagnosed with pertussis (whooping cough). Pertussis is a bacterial infection that affects the airways and is easily spread from person to person by coughing or sneezing. People with pertussis may have a series of coughs followed by vomiting, or difficulty catching breath. Anyone can get pertussis, but it can be very dangerous for babies and people with weakened immune systems. A pertussis fact sheet from the St. Louis County Department of Public Health can be found at https://mo01931486.schoolwires.net/cms/lib/MO01931486/Centricity/Domain/877/Pertussis_Fact_Sheet_2017.pdf . Additional information about pertussis from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/materials/index.html>.

When pertussis is circulating in a school community, the St. Louis County Department of Public Health, who recommends that students and staff with cough symptoms be evaluated by their doctor. **Testing to identify pertussis along with giving antibiotics early can help lower the chances of spreading the disease to others.** Infants, women in their third trimester of pregnancy and all persons with compromised immune symptoms should also talk to their doctor post-exposure antimicrobial prophylaxis if there is a known exposure to someone with pertussis.

Here are some other things that you can do to stay healthy and help promote healthy classrooms:

1. When students are not present, wipe down flat surfaces, door knobs and things that students touch regularly with disinfectant wipes.
2. Teach children to cough into their sleeves and to wash hands after coughing.
3. Let the school nurse if you have a student with a persistent cough.
4. Make sure that your Tdap vaccination is up to date. Adults should have this vaccine once every 10 years.

Thank you for your assistance. If you have any questions, please consult your school nurse, your physician or the Saint Louis County Department of Health at 314-615-1630.