

Pertussis Advisory

This is to advise you that there has been a case of whooping cough (pertussis) at the **Pineview Elementary School in Reedsburg and in the Reedsburg Community**. Parents and guardians are being notified so they are aware of the signs and symptoms.

What is pertussis?

Pertussis (also called whooping cough) is a disease caused by bacteria that spreads from person to person with close contact. Pertussis is often mild in older children and adults, but **can cause serious problems in infants**.

Who gets pertussis?

Pertussis is most common among people who are unvaccinated, or who have lost the protection they got from childhood vaccines (immunity usually wanes by adolescence), and have not received a booster dose of vaccine. Infants are also likely to get the disease since they are often too young to have full protection from the vaccine.

What are the symptoms?

Pertussis is a cough illness whose symptoms can range from mild to severe. It usually begins with cold-like symptoms (runny nose, sneezing, dry cough). After two weeks of cold-like symptoms, the cough slowly gets worse. The next stage, which may last from 4–6 weeks, may be marked by coughing spells that are uncontrollable and may be followed by vomiting. Between spells, the person may appear to be well and usually there is no fever. These symptoms are common in infants and young children. Vaccinated children, teens and adults may have milder symptoms that can seem like bronchitis.

How is pertussis spread?

The germs that cause pertussis live in the nose, mouth and throat and are sprayed into the air when an infected person sneezes, coughs or talks. Other people can then inhale the germs in the droplets produced by the person with pertussis. Touching a tissue or sharing a cup used by someone with the disease can also spread the disease. The first symptoms usually appear 7 to 10 days after a person is exposed, although sometimes people do not get sick for up to 21 days after their last exposure.

How is pertussis diagnosed?

A doctor may think a patient has pertussis based on their symptoms. A culture or PCR test can help a doctor confirm this. For testing, a swab is taken from the back of the nose.

How can pertussis be prevented?

Although DTP or DTaP vaccine (diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis) usually provides adequate protection against pertussis to children, the effects of the vaccine wear off over time, leaving most teens and adults at risk of the disease. However, a vaccine for teens and adults, called Tdap, is recommended to give protection against pertussis in these age groups. Tdap is given as a single “booster” dose. If your child or adolescent (10 years of age or older) has not yet had a dose of Tdap, contact your healthcare provider to discuss receiving this vaccine. If your child is less than 10 years of age, they should be up-to-date for the DTaP series (check with you provider if you are unsure). Sauk County Health Department offers DTaP and Tdap vaccines free of charge.

Antibiotics are sometimes given to help prevent illness in the contacts of someone with pertussis, or to decrease infectiousness in someone with pertussis. After five days of treatment a case is no longer contagious.

What should I do?

If your child is **symptomatic**, he/she should be evaluated by your family’s health care provider. If pertussis is suspected, testing for pertussis should be performed and five days of antibiotic treatment should be completed **before returning to school**. Please contact your health care provider and bring this advisory with you.

Students who are **symptomatic** and who have had **close** contact with a case of pertussis will be excluded from school until they have completed 5 days of appropriate antibiotics.

If you have any questions, please call the Sauk County Health Department at 608-355-3290.