



ITHACA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

400 Lake Street • P.O. Box 549 • Ithaca, New York • 14851-0549

11/8/2017

From: Melissa Dhundale, MD
ICSD School Physician

Dear Parent or Guardian,

A case of pertussis (whooping cough) has been identified at the Lehman Alternative Community School. A suspected case of pertussis (whooping cough) has been identified at Cayuga Heights Elementary.

Pertussis is a contagious bacterial infection of the respiratory tract that is spread through the air by coughing or sneezing. Pertussis begins with cold symptoms and a cough, which becomes worse over 1-2 weeks. Symptoms usually include a long series of coughs followed by a whooping noise. Its severe cough can last for weeks or months, sometimes leading to coughing fits and/or vomiting. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help alleviate the cough. Anyone can get pertussis, but it can be very dangerous for infants and people with weakened immune systems.

Tompkins County Health Department recommends:

- If your child has a cough:
 - Keep your child home from school and activities, such as sports or play groups. Make an appointment with your child's doctor as soon as possible and tell the doctor that your child may have been exposed to pertussis. A special nose swab test will probably be done followed by antibiotic prescription.
 - Be sure to keep your child who is coughing at home, out of school and away from extended family and friends, until five days of the antibiotic are completed.
 - If your child is diagnosed with pertussis, call the school to inform them.

- Make sure your family's vaccinations are up-to-date. **The single most effective control measure is maintaining the highest possible level of immunization in the community.** Protection against pertussis from the childhood vaccine, DTaP, decreases over time. Older children and adults, including pregnant women, should get a pertussis booster vaccine called Tdap. If you need the Tdap vaccine, contact your doctor or call the Tompkins County Health Department.

If you have further concerns or questions please contact your doctor or Melissa Gatch, BSN, RN at the Tompkins County Health Department at 607-274-6604.