



CLARK COUNTY
WASHINGTON

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Public Health
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Date: Feb. 6, 2012
To: Parents of Children at Frontier Middle School
From: Dr. Alan Melnick, Clark County Health Officer
Re: Pertussis Cases

Dear Parent or Legal Guardian,

We are writing to let you know that there have been several cases of pertussis (whooping cough) in the community including a case at **Frontier Middle School**. Your child may have been exposed to the ill persons if they attend this school.

Pertussis is a highly contagious disease that is spread through the air by coughing. Pertussis usually begins with cold-like symptoms and a cough that worsens over 1-2 weeks. Symptoms may include coughing “fits” followed by a “whooping” noise, vomiting, cyanosis (turning blue) or the inability to catch one’s breath. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help eliminate the cough. Usually, persons infected with pertussis do not have a fever. In older children and adults the symptoms may be only a persistent cough which is worse at night. This illness is often very severe in small infants. **Please see the recommendations below for children and staff of Frontier Middle School.**

Although adults and children may catch pertussis, even if they have had all or some of their immunizations (DTaP), **vaccination against pertussis is still one of the best ways of reducing the risk of getting this disease.** Clark County Public Health encourages parents to take this opportunity to ensure their families are up-to-date with vaccinations that protect against pertussis and other diseases.

Persons who are exposed to pertussis can lower the risk of becoming ill by taking antibiotics prescribed by their health care provider. Persons who are already ill after being exposed to someone with pertussis can take antibiotics to recover more quickly and to reduce the risk of spreading pertussis to others.

Clark County Public Health Recommendations:

Children and staff at Frontier Middle School may have been exposed to pertussis.

1. If you or your child were exposed as described above and developed a cold or coughing illness at any time since **Jan. 17th** and the symptoms are still present it is important for you to be evaluated ***promptly*** by your doctor for pertussis infection.

2. If you are pregnant, especially if you are in the third trimester, and were exposed as described above, please speak with your doctor about getting antibiotics for yourself to prevent the development of illness even if you do not have any above symptoms. These antibiotics must be taken as soon as possible after exposure.
3. If you see your doctor for any of the reasons listed above please show this letter to your doctor at your visit.
4. Please make sure that you are current on all of your pertussis vaccinations whether or not you were exposed to the ill person. Pertussis vaccines are recommended for both children and adults. Adults and adolescents should have a Tdap booster shot to protect them against pertussis.

If you have questions about pertussis or recommended childhood vaccinations, please call your health care provider or the Clark County Public Health Department at (360) 397-8182. Thank you for your attention.

Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH
Clark County Health Officer