

September 16, 2024

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Recently, a child attending Dewey School has been reported as having pertussis, also known as whooping cough. This illness is reportable to the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH). You are receiving this letter because your child may have had close, personal contact with the ill student or direct contact with germs from their nose and throat. This makes them at a slightly increased risk of becoming sick with whooping cough.

Whooping cough is an infection that affects the airways. The bacteria that causes whooping cough can easily spread from person to person by coughing or sneezing. The infection can also spread person to person by sharing food, drink, or other items contaminated with germs from the nose and throat. The infection can cause a severe cough that lasts for weeks or months, sometimes leading to coughing fits or vomiting. Anyone can get whooping cough, but it can be very dangerous for babies and people with certain health conditions, which may lead to other complications. Family members with whooping cough, especially siblings and parents, can spread the disease to babies.

There is a vaccine to protect against whooping cough, which is especially important to consider for families with an infant less than 1 year old and those with pregnant women. You can check with your health care provider to determine if your family's vaccinations are up to date. Even though the vaccine can help protect against whooping cough, it may not prevent all infections. Therefore, even if your child or their family members are up to date on the whooping cough vaccine, it is important to follow the recommendations below.

Recommendations:

If your child lives in a household with an infant or pregnant woman in the last 3 weeks of pregnancy:

- Let your child's health care provider know about this letter and their close contact with a case of pertussis (whooping cough). They can decide if your child should receive antibiotics to help prevent them from getting sick and spreading it to high-risk household members.

If your child has a cough:

- Keep your child home, including from school and activities.
- Make an appointment with your child's health care provider as soon as possible and tell them your child may have been exposed to pertussis (whooping cough).

If your child is diagnosed with Whooping Cough:

- Stay home and avoid all activities outside the home until 5 days after starting correct antibiotics or 21 days after the start of the cough.

If you or your health care provider has further questions, please contact the Washington County Health Department, 918-335-3005, 8 to 5 pm, Monday—Friday. You can find additional information about pertussis (whooping cough) on the CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/index.html>

Sincerely,

Tiffany Hill, RN, Coordinating Nurse
Washington County Health Department
Oklahoma State Department of Health