



PARKLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

"Educating For Success, Inspiring Excellence."

Student Services Department

1210 Springhouse Road, Allentown, PA 18104-2119

PHONE 610-351-5555 FAX 610-351-5569

www.parklandsd.org

BRENDA L. DERENZO

Director of Student Services

ANDREW L. WEBER

Supervisor of Special Education

SHERI DEEB, RN

Supervisor of Health Services & Wellness

VALERIE C. GULYCZ

Special Education Coordinator, 9-12

DANIELLE M. ROLAND

Special Education Coordinator, K-8

STEVEN K. BEHR

Special Education Coordinator, K-8

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

The Department of Health has alerted our school nurse at Parkland High School that Pertussis has been reported to the Department of Health. This case was verified and we are sending this letter to alert you to the situation. Your child may have been in close contact with a person who was diagnosed with pertussis (whooping cough). **We encourage** you to contact your child's physician and explain to the doctor your child may have been exposed to Pertussis and may need to be evaluated.

Pertussis is a highly contagious disease that is spread through the air when an infected person sneezes or coughs. Pertussis begins with cold symptoms and a cough, which becomes much worse over 1-2 weeks. Symptoms usually include a long series of coughs ("coughing fits") followed by a whooping noise. However, older children, adults and very young infants may not develop the whoop. People with pertussis may have a series of coughs followed by vomiting, turning blue, or difficulty catching their breath. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help alleviate the cough. The disease can be very severe and, although deaths are rare, they do occur especially in infants less than one year of age.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health strongly recommends the following:

- **If your child has a cough, contact your child's doctor.** Explain to the doctor your child may have been exposed to a case of pertussis and needs to be evaluated. All suspected cases of pertussis should have a nasopharyngeal aspirate or swab obtained for culture. Please show this letter to your child's doctor.
- If your child is diagnosed or suspected of having pertussis, he or she will be treated with an antibiotic. **Your child will be able to return to school after completing the first 5 days of the medication.** It is very important that upon returning to school your child continues taking his or her medication until completed.
- If your child is diagnosed with pertussis, all household members and other close contacts should also be treated with antibiotics regardless of their age or vaccination status.
- Infants under one year, and particularly under 6 months, are most likely to experience severe illness if they develop pertussis. When possible, infants should be kept away from people with a cough. A physician should promptly evaluate infants with any coughing illness.
- Making sure that children receive all their shots on time is the best way to control pertussis in the future. Children should receive one dose of DTaP vaccine at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, and between 15-18 months of age, and again at 4-6 years. Adolescents and adults should be up to date with pertussis vaccine by getting a vaccine called Tdap, which can be given as early as 1-12 years of age. If you are not sure your child is properly immunized, promptly contact his or her doctor or clinic.

If you or your doctor has a question about pertussis, please call the Pennsylvania Department of Health at 1-877-PA-HEALTH. Further information about Pertussis can be found on the Department of Health web site at www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health. You will find Pertussis under Health topics A-Z.

Sincerely yours,
Brenda DeRenzo
Director of Student Services

Sheri Deeb, RN
Supervisor School Health & Wellness