



Oneonta City School District

31 Center Street- Oneonta, New York 13820 - (607) 433-8232 - Fax: (607)433-8290

September 18, 2012

Dear Parent/Guardians:

As you may be aware, there have been recent cases of pertussis (*whooping cough*) in our school community.

Pertussis is a highly contagious disease that is spread through the air by cough. 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. There is generally only a slight fever. People with pertussis may have a series of coughs followed by vomiting, turning blue, or difficulty catching breath. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help alleviate the cough.

Even though most of our students have been vaccinated we encourage you to take them to their primary care physician if they exhibit any of the symptoms mentioned above.

We have consulted our school physician and it is at his suggestion that we are sending this letter. Additional information from the New York State Department of Health is included on the back of this page.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the school nurse, your own physician or the New York State Department of Health.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

David P. Rowley
Superintendent of Schools
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(Additional Information on Back)

Please consider the following New York State Department of Health recommendations:

1. Infants under one year old, especially those under six months, are most likely to have severe symptoms if they develop pertussis. When possible, young infants should be kept away from people with a cough. **Infants with any coughing illness should be seen promptly by their doctor.**
2. Pertussis vaccine is now available for children and adults. If you have children who have not been completely immunized against pertussis, we recommend that you discuss this with your physician. Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis containing vaccines are now available. DTaP is given to children under 7 years of age. Two Tdap vaccines were licensed in 2005 for use in adolescents and adults.
3. If your child comes down with cold symptoms that include a cough, talk to your child's doctor without delay. Tell the doctor that pertussis has been seen in your child's schoolmates and present this letter. If your physician suspects pertussis, your child should be tested, given an antibiotic and remain out of school for 5 days.

Contact definitions:

Close Contacts

- Direct face-to-face exposure within three feet of a symptomatic patient (e.g. close friends, playmates, household members, girlfriend, boyfriend, teammates, healthcare provider, patients).
- Sharing the same daycare, pre-kindergarten or kindergarten classroom for ≥ 1 hr with a symptomatic case-patient.
- Direct contact with respiratory, oral, nasal, or pharyngeal secretions from a symptomatic case-patient (e.g., kissing; sharing lip gloss, cigarettes, drugs, food, utensils).

High-Risk Cases or Contacts

The following groups may need to be handled as close contacts despite a lesser exposure. The risk of severe disease or poor outcome may be higher in these groups or in those to whom these groups may transmit disease.

- Infants < 1 year of age.
- Immunocompromised individuals.
- Persons with chronic lung disease and persons with compromised health status due to other chronic medical conditions.
- Persons who have or are suspected of having pertussis, or are contacts of a pertussis case-patient and may expose persons at high risk for severe disease including:
- Health care personnel with pertussis and exposed healthcare personnel who are symptomatic should be relieved from direct patient contact during the infectious period or until they have completed 5 days of treatment.
- Pregnant women, OR other household members or contacts who have pertussis and may expose an infant.