



Community and Health Services Department
Public Health Branch

September 23, 2014

Dear students attending Newmarket High School:

Re: Potential pertussis (whooping cough) exposure

York Region Community and Health Services has been notified that an individual with pertussis (whooping cough) attended Newmarket High School, 505 Pickering Crescent in the Town of Newmarket, from September 2, 2014 to September 5, 2014 while contagious.

Those who attended Newmarket High School during the above dates may have been exposed. Pertussis is potentially a serious infection, particularly for infants less than one year of age and pregnant women in their third trimester who may pass the infection on to their newborns.

Many people receive pertussis vaccination as children. When vaccinated, the risk of pertussis is low.

Pertussis can spread very easily from infected persons to others through coughing or sneezing. Symptoms can include:

- A runny nose and cough, usually within three weeks of contact with an infected individual
- Sudden violent attacks of coughing that may end in a high pitched whoop sound, loss of breath or vomiting, which can last from six to ten weeks even with antibiotic treatment

Should you develop any of the above symptoms, please visit your family doctor as soon as possible and tell him/her that you have been in contact with someone with pertussis. Your doctor may prescribe antibiotics and may do further testing.

York Region Community and Health Services recommend that all children, adolescents and adults be fully immunized against pertussis. Please confirm with your doctor that you are up-to-date for pertussis immunization. Please submit immunization records for children up to 17 years of age to York Region Public Health via:

Fax: (905) 300-2183 or **Phone:** 1-877-794-1880 Option 2.

Or update your immunization record on line at <https://immunization.york.ca>.

A fact sheet on pertussis is attached. If you have further questions on pertussis, immunizations or any public-health related issue, please contact York Region *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653, TTY: 1-866-252-9933 or visit www.york.ca Regular business hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joy Marshall".

Joy Marshall MN
Manager, Infectious Disease Control Division
Community and Health Services

Att.



April 2011

Information sheet

Community and Health Services Department



Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

What is pertussis?

Pertussis is a highly contagious bacterial disease that affects the respiratory tract. People of any age can become ill with pertussis, but it is particularly severe in the first year of life and may require hospitalization. Pertussis in adults has increased significantly since about 2004. As adolescent and adult cases increase, newborns are again at risk of getting pertussis before their vaccinations can be completed. Infants under one are also more likely to develop complications.

What are the symptoms of pertussis?

The range of symptoms and the severity of the disease can vary according to the age of the person, the degree of immunity, the use of antibiotics and if pertussis exists along with another respiratory infection. In infants and young children, the disease begins much like a cold with a runny nose, possibly a low-grade fever and a mild but irritating cough for one to two weeks. The illness progresses to spells of explosive, uncontrollable coughing that can interrupt breathing, eating and sleeping. The cough is commonly followed by vomiting and exhaustion. Following the cough, infants and children may make a loud crowing or “whooping” sound as they struggle to inhale air (hence the common name “whooping cough”). These coughing episodes can occur on their own or can be triggered by yawning, stretching, laughing, eating or yelling. They usually occur in groups, with multiple episodes every hour around the clock. The severe coughing spells usually continue for six to ten weeks, but can last longer.

In older children, adolescents and adults, the symptoms are usually milder and without the typical whoop.

Symptoms usually develop between seven and ten days after exposure to the bacteria, but may appear anywhere from five to 21 days afterwards.

How does pertussis spread?

Pertussis is a very contagious disease. It is caused by the *Bordetella pertussis* bacteria, which live in an infected person's mouth, nose and throat. When an infected person coughs or sneezes, the bacteria can be sprayed into the air and breathed in by people who are nearby. You can also become infected through direct contact with discharges from the nose or throat of an infected person.

A person who is infected with *Bordetella pertussis* can spread the bacteria to others from seven days prior to the onset of symptoms until 21 days after the cough starts, if left untreated. If antibiotic treatment is started, the person is no longer contagious after five days. A young, unimmunized and untreated infant may be infectious for 6 or more weeks after the onset of the cough; an untreated immunized adolescent may be infectious for 2 weeks or more after cough onset.

For further information, please call:
York Region Health Connection 1-800-361-5653
TTY 1-866-252-9933 or visit www.york.ca

How can pertussis be prevented?

Immunization is the single most effective strategy for preventing pertussis. To prevent the spread of pertussis to others, a person who has the disease should:

- Stay away from school/workplace/daycare and avoid contact with others until you have completed five days of antibiotic treatment. If you are not taking antibiotics, you should stay at home for 21 days from the onset of the disease
- Notify anyone with whom you have had recent contact about your illness, especially parents of babies and young children

People who have been in contact with an infectious person should:

- Check their immunization records to be sure they have been immunized against pertussis.
- Watch for signs of whooping cough.

People who have been in close contact with someone with pertussis (live in the same household / attend the same daycare / share the same airspace for extended periods) may be advised to take antibiotics to protect them from this disease.

How is pertussis treated?

Antibiotics are commonly used to treat pertussis. The antibiotics reduce the infectiousness and eliminates symptoms when given early in the course of the illness.

For further information, please call:
York Region Health Connection 1-800-361-5653
TTY 1-866-252-9933 or visit www.york.ca

