



December 17, 2024

Dear Charger Families,

It has come to our attention that a student in our Jr./Sr. High School was recently diagnosed with pertussis (whooping cough). We have been advised by the Pennsylvania DOH regarding this matter. In addition, while we regularly clean our bathrooms and classroom, we have instructed our custodial staff to perform a deep cleaning in areas where the student may have been.

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. Please refer to the enclosed fact sheet for more information on pertussis.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health strongly recommends the following:

- If you/your child is coughing, promptly contact your/your child’s doctor. Explain to the doctor you/your child have/has been exposed to a case of pertussis and needs to be evaluated. Your/your child’s doctor may obtain a nasopharyngeal culture to test for pertussis. In addition, if the doctor suspects pertussis, an antibiotic will be given to you/your child to help lower the chance of spreading the disease to others. You/your child will be able to return to school/work after completing the first 5 days of the medication. It is very important that upon returning to school/work you/your child continue(s) taking your/his or her medication until completed.
- Even if you/your child are/is not coughing, you may need to contact your/your child’s doctor and explain that you/he or she may have been exposed to a case of pertussis. The doctor may give you/your child an antibiotic to lower his or her chance of becoming ill if you/he or she fits one of the following categories:
  - Infants and women in their third trimester of pregnancy
  - All persons with pre-existing health conditions that may be exacerbated by pertussis (e.g., immunocompromised, severe asthma)
  - Contacts who themselves have close contact with infants, pregnant women, or individuals with pre-existing health conditions that may be exacerbated by pertussis



HOLLY W. SAYRE  
Superintendent of Schools

- All contacts in high-risk settings that include infants or women in the third trimester of pregnancy.
- You/your child can attend work/school while taking this medication.
- If you/your child are/is diagnosed with pertussis, all household members and other close contacts should also be treated with antibiotics regardless of their age or vaccination status.
- Making sure that children receive all their shots on time is the best way to control pertussis in the future. In children, diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis vaccine (DTaP) is only given to those under age 7 years of age. Children should receive one dose of DTaP vaccine at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, and between 15-18 months of age. In addition, one dose is needed before starting school (on or after the 4<sup>th</sup> birthday). Check with your pediatrician to see if your child is eligible for another dose of DTaP in the accelerated schedule. If you are not sure your child is properly immunized, promptly contact his or her doctor.
- The combination tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis vaccine (Tdap) is recommended for children ages 7 through 10 (if not fully vaccinated) and adolescents and adults as a one-time dose. It is also recommended during EACH pregnancy to protect the newborn infant.
- Anyone eligible for Tdap may receive it regardless of interval since the most recent tetanus containing vaccine.

If you or your doctor has a question about pertussis, please call the Pennsylvania Department of Health at 1-877-PA-HEALTH or your local health department.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Holly W. Sayre".

Holly W. Sayre  
Superintendent of Schools  
Carbondale Area School District