

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) in Schools

Suspect pertussis in school?

If you become aware of a suspected or confirmed case of pertussis in a child or staff member in your school, notify public health officials as soon as possible.

Public health investigators will contact the person's health care provider to determine whether a diagnosis of pertussis is confirmed. They will also work with you and the patient (or parent/guardian) to address questions and concerns, plan appropriate notifications, and implement prevention and control measures, as needed.

Action steps for schools

- Be aware of symptoms and consider pertussis in any student or staff member who has a cough lasting more than two weeks or a severe cough that occurs in sudden, uncontrollable bursts, especially if followed by vomiting.
- Encourage an evaluation by a health care provider if you suspect a student or staff person may have pertussis.
- Report all suspected or confirmed cases of pertussis to the Minnesota Department of Health at 651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414.

When should students with pertussis be excluded from school?

Exclude students from school only if necessary. See the [Pertussis: School and Activities Exclusion Recommendations](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/pertussis/school/schoolexcl.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/pertussis/school/schoolexcl.pdf) document for additional guidance.

Should we ever close school due to pertussis?

No. We do not recommend closing schools due to outbreaks of pertussis. There is no evidence that it prevents the spread of disease, as students may gather in other settings.

What to expect when a case of pertussis is confirmed in your school

Public health will collaborate with you to:

- Identify close contacts of the case. Public health prevention and control measures focus on close contacts because pertussis spreads by droplets coughed into the air. In general, persons are considered close contacts if they:
 - Are within 3 feet of someone with pertussis for at least 10 hours a week, or
 - Have direct face-to-face contact with someone with pertussis.

Note: If several cases of pertussis are identified in your school the threshold for symptoms of concern changes a bit and includes:

- A cough illness lasting at least seven days or,
- A cough illness of any duration if a known close exposure has occurred.

Inform others in your school and community about pertussis -- especially if pertussis in the school generates a lot of questions and concerns or if a cluster or outbreak of cases occurs. Public health will also notify health care providers in the community.

Promote Tdap vaccine for adolescents and adults, including school staff, teachers, and coaches, particularly in the event of an outbreak.

PERTUSSIS (WHOOPING COUGH) IN SCHOOLS

Remind parents about the importance of keeping their younger children up-to-date on the DTaP vaccine series.

If you have questions or concerns, contact MDH at 651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414 or see [Pertussis \(Whooping Cough\)](#) (www.health.state.mn.us/pertussis).

Vaccine-Preventable Disease Section
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651-201-5414
www.health.state.mn.us/pertussis

*To obtain this information in a different format, call:
651-201-5414.*