

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



STEVE LEVY
SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

HUMAYUN J. CHAUDHRY, D.O., M.S.
Commissioner

February 4, 2009

Dear Parent,

There has been a probable case of Pertussis at the Sachem High School East . Pertussis, also known as “whooping cough” is a highly contagious disease that is spread through the air by cough. Children and adults may still develop Pertussis even if they are up to date with their vaccinations as immunity to Pertussis wanes over the years. Pertussis is particularly dangerous, even fatal, to infants who are not fully immunized.

There are 3 stages of pertussis infection:

Stage 1: Mild upper respiratory symptoms, low-grade fever, slight cough (mimics a cold, lasts 1-2 weeks, very infectious stage)

Stage 2: Spasmodic coughing episodes sometimes followed by long whooping sound (6 or more weeks), may also have vomiting after coughing episodes (continues to be infectious)

Stage 3: Although the infection is not contagious after appropriate antibiotic treatment, coughing episodes may persist for weeks to months, “cough of 100 days.”

The child attended school and was contagious with respiratory symptoms January 15th and 16th, 2009. If your child has been exposed to Pertussis, it may take up to three weeks for symptoms to develop. Incubation period is usually 7-10 days with a range of 5-21 days. Immunocompromised children may take longer to develop symptoms. If you observe these symptoms in your child, contact your pediatrician and request that your child be tested for pertussis with a special nasal-throat swab. This test can be performed at either the doctor’s office or hospital emergency room. ***Early treatment with the appropriate antibiotic for the symptomatic student, his asymptomatic family and close contacts (not currently showing symptoms), will eliminate disease transmission and may reduce disease severity in the child.***

A new combination Tetanus/Diphtheria/Pertussis (Tdap) vaccine, for children over the age of ten and adults, is available which can provide protection against the disease. You can discuss administration of this vaccine with your physician. Parents or their physician may contact the Division of Disease Control at 631-853-3055 if they have any questions. For additional information on Pertussis, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov

Sincerely,

David G. Graham, M.D., M.P.H.
Deputy Health Commissioner

Dennis Russo, M.D.



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DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

225 Rabro Drive East , Hauppauge, NY 11788 (631) 853-3055 Fax (631) 853-3073