

PERTUSSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH) NOTICE

Dear Parent or Guardian,

There have been several cases of pertussis at Mercy High School this year. Pertussis is a highly communicable disease that infects the respiratory tract and lasts for up to 6-10 weeks.

Pertussis begins with a runny nose, sneezing, possibly a low-grade fever, and mild cough. After a week or two, a persistent cough develops, which may occur in explosive bursts, sometimes ending in a high-pitched whooping sound and vomiting. Older children and adults may have a less typical cough; however, it is usually persistent and may lead to vomiting and a whoop.

Pertussis can spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. **The vaccine is usually protective, but sometimes even immunized children and adults can get pertussis.** This is because the immunity acquired through vaccination can decrease over time.

Pertussis is effectively treated with antibiotics. A person is no longer considered contagious once they have completed an age-appropriate course of antibiotic treatment.

To prevent the spread of pertussis:

- Please contact your healthcare provider if your child develops a cough and/or cold-like symptoms.
- Make sure that your children are up to date with their DTaP immunizations (4 doses at 2, 4, 6 and 15 months of age, as well as a booster shot at 4-6 years of age). A booster shot (Tdap) is recommended for all adolescents aged 11-12 years of age, as well as for adults as a one-time booster in place of their routine Td (tetanus) vaccination.
- Infants less than 1 year of age, and children who are too young to have completed the DTaP immunization series are particularly susceptible to pertussis. Adults in close contact with infants less than 1 year of age, employees in school or child-care settings, and health-care providers are particularly encouraged to receive a Tdap booster vaccination.

Per recommendations from San Mateo County Health System, children with pertussis should stay home from school until a 5 day course of antibiotic treatment has been completed. If antibiotics are not given or not completed, the child should be excluded for 21 days. Please notify the school nurse immediately if your child is diagnosed with pertussis.

For further information contact your health care provider.

For more information on pertussis:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/>

California Department of Public Health: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Pertussis.aspx>