

Dear <participant / participant parent>:

We are writing to inform you that your child may have been exposed to pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough, while attending Camp Rotary between June 27 and July 3, 2010. The Michigan Department of Community Health was informed that a child attendee was diagnosed with pertussis and was capable of spreading the disease to others while at Camp Rotary. We are contacting all attendees so that you are aware of the exposure, the signs and symptoms of pertussis, treatment, and vaccines available.

Pertussis is easily spread by coughing and sneezing. Symptoms usually begin 7-10 days (or up to 20 days) after exposure. The disease starts like the common cold, with runny nose or congestion, sneezing, and maybe mild cough or fever. But after 1–2 weeks, severe coughing begins. Infants and children with the disease cough violently and rapidly, over and over, until the air is gone from their lungs and they're forced to inhale with a loud "whooping" sound. The coughing can last for weeks, even months. Adults and adolescents typically have a milder form of pertussis; however, they can still easily spread the infection to others, including infants and young children. Pertussis is most severe for babies; more than half of infants less than 1 year of age who get the disease must be hospitalized.

We recommend that you contact your healthcare provider immediately if you start to develop signs of pertussis and inform them that you may have been exposed to the disease. This is particularly important for people who may have contact with children less than 12 months of age.

The best way to prevent pertussis is to get vaccinated on time, according to the recommended vaccination schedule. There are safe and effective vaccines that protect children and adults.

- Infants should receive DTaP at 2, 4, 6 and 15-18 months of age.
- A fifth dose, or booster, is recommended at 4–6 years of age.
- Pre-teens, adolescents, and adults 64 years of age and younger should get a one-time dose of Tdap.
- There is no pertussis vaccine licensed or recommended for persons 65 years of age and older. However, health care providers may choose to give Tdap to these persons. This decision depends on the provider and patient agreeing that the benefit of the vaccine exceeds the risk.

Getting vaccinated with Tdap is especially important for families with and caregivers of infants less than 12 months of age. Babies who get pertussis are often infected by parents, older siblings, or other caregivers who might not even know they have the disease.

If pertussis is circulating in the community, there is still a chance that a fully vaccinated person (of any age) can catch this very contagious disease. This is because no vaccine is 100% effective and vaccine protection can fade with time. However, when a vaccinated person gets pertussis, the infection is usually less severe.

We recommend that you talk to your healthcare provider or local health department and make sure that you and your child are protected against pertussis. Additional information can be found at:

- www.michigan.gov/immunize
- www.cdc.gov/vaccines

Sincerely,

Local Health Department



Central Michigan District Health Department
"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"

For more information, call your local CMDHD branch office:

Arenac (989) 846-6541/Clare (989) 539-6731/Gladwin (989) 426-9431/
Isabella (989) 773-5921/Osceola (231) 832-5532/Roscommon (989) 366-9166

www.cmchd.org

Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

What is Pertussis (also known as "Whooping Cough")?

It is a highly contagious disease of the respiratory system.

How does it spread?

Pertussis is a highly contagious disease that is passed from person to person by respiratory secretions. After exposure to pertussis, symptoms may begin in about 10 – 21 days.

What are the symptoms and when do they appear?

At first, early symptoms of pertussis may include cold symptoms, such as a runny nose, sneezing, low-grade fever and a mild cough for about one week. In the second stage, which can last from 1 to 10 weeks, people experience episodes of numerous, rapid coughs with a distinctive sound. The cough is so harsh that many people wind up vomiting at the end of a coughing spell. Infants and young children often appear very ill and distressed and may turn blue and experience vomiting. In the third and final stage, which may last for months, people may experience episodes of numerous, rapid coughs, especially when they are diagnosed with respiratory infections.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

A person with pertussis is most infectious during the first stage of the disease and during the first two weeks after the cough begins. Antibiotic treatment taken as prescribed reduces the period of infectiousness.

How is Pertussis "Whooping Cough" diagnosed?

Pertussis is diagnosed by a medical provider through a physical examination and possibly a laboratory test, which involves taking a sample from the nose.

Is there treatment for people diagnosed with Pertussis?

Patients are given antibiotics to help treat the disease. Bed rest, fluids and controlling the fever and cough are also recommended.

How can Pertussis be prevented?

Infants and children can be immunized against Pertussis by receiving the DTP or DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) vaccinations. Adolescents and adults can be immunized against Pertussis by receiving the Tdap (tetanus and pertussis) vaccine. Please contact your medical provider or local health department for more information on these vaccines.