

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a highly contagious bacterial infection of the respiratory tract. Symptoms can often be confusing in the beginning of the disease as they start with mild common cold symptoms, such as: runny nose, nasal congestion, sneezing, red, watery eyes, mild fever, dry cough, and general feeling of being unwell and loss of appetite. However after a week or 2, signs and symptoms usually become worse and include severe coughing attacks that bring up thick phlegm and coughing attacks-up to 15 in a row- that end with a high-pitched whoop sound as the person gasps for air.

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, they state that more than 470 cases of pertussis have been reported in Illinois this year. A significant proportion of these cases have occurred among secondary school students. Keep in mind that pertussis is not life-threatening to most healthy secondary school students. Pertussis outbreaks in schools, in which numerous students are ill, often last for many months and can be disruptive to academic, athletic and extracurricular activities. For more information please visit: <http://www.idph.state.il.us/public/hb/hbpertus.htm>

In adults, signs and symptoms of pertussis may resemble those of bronchitis, a respiratory infection that causes a nagging cough-you may have heard it referred to as the "100-day cough." Pertussis is usually milder in adolescents and adults. However, it can still be transmitted to young infants who are the most vulnerable. About a year and a half ago, vaccines have been tested and licensed that can be used in ages 10-64. It is administered as part of a combination called Tdap. Since the United States' rate of pertussis has had an increase of 8 times since 1976, the Tdap has come into widespread use. Approximately 80% of our freshman class is protected under this vaccine. It is not yet an Illinois State requirement for adolescents to receive a pertussis vaccine.

Although probable diagnosis can be made by your doctor based on symptoms, the **only definitive test** is a nose or throat culture and test that is sent to a lab and tested for the whooping cough bacteria. Blood tests only check for elevated white blood cells and therefore are not specific for whooping cough.

When whooping cough is diagnosed early in older children, teenagers and adults, doctors usually prescribe bed rest along with an antibiotic such as azithromycin or erythromycin. Although antibiotics won't cure whooping cough, they can shorten the duration and severity of the illness and they shorten the period of communicability. If there is a confirmed diagnosis but a slow response to antibiotic therapy, it may be necessary to take the antibiotics for at least two weeks and maybe longer. A case of whooping cough usually resolves in six weeks but may last longer.

If your student has had a definitive case of pertussis diagnosed, LFHS asks that we receive a note from your doctor clearing your student to return to school.

If your student has not had a Tdap since 5th grade, talk to your doctor about getting one for your student.

The Lake County Board of Health (847-377-8470) offer the Tdap to adults for \$40.00 and 19 and under students for \$8.00. Payment is due on receipt of services. When paying by check, you need to bring a picture ID. Children under 19 need their immunization records. These can be provided by either your doctor's office or LFHS Health Office. The LCBH's main clinic is at 2303 Dodge Ave. in Waukegan. Their hours are MTWF 1-3PM, Thurs 1-4:30 PM, Sat 9-11. Lake Forest Hospital has their

clinic Dec. 23, 2006 9-11AM. Children under 19 need to bring their immunization records and adults need to call the above phone number and let them know you would be coming to the LFH Saturday clinic so that they can bring enough adult vaccines.

If you have any other questions, please call Nurse Diane Bower @ 847-582-7335. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Illinois Department of Public Health site: Illinois State Board of Education, *Weekly Message*, December 11, 2006 issue.