

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



STEVE LEVY
SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

JAMES L. TOMARKEN, MD
MSW, MPH, MBA, FRCPC, FACP
Commissioner

Dear Parents and Staff,

December 8, 2011

This letter is to inform you that Suffolk County has seen an increase in Pertussis, a respiratory illness also known as "whooping cough". The disease is a highly contagious bacterial disease that is spread through the air by cough from an infected individual. 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. Up to date vaccination against Pertussis, however, remains the best defense to prevent illness. Pertussis disease is particularly dangerous 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).

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

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

Once a susceptible individual is exposed to Pertussis, it may take up to 21 days for symptoms to develop. Incubation may be longer in immunocompromised individuals. If you observe these symptoms in your child, contact your pediatrician/ health care provider 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. Blood testing is not confirmatory for this disease. **Early treatment with the appropriate antibiotic for a symptomatic child and antibiotic prophylaxis for his/her asymptomatic family (not currently showing symptoms), will eliminate disease transmission and may reduce disease severity.**

If your child's health care provider suspects a diagnosis of Pertussis, orders testing and prescribes antibiotics, your child should remain home until he/she has completed five days of his/her antibiotic treatment.

For additional information on Pertussis, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov. Parents or their physician may contact the Division of Disease Control at 631-853-3055 if they have any questions.

Sincerely,

Dennis Russo, MD
Division of Public Health



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH
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