

Pertussis in Schools and Childcare – A Response Guide



Work, School and Childcare Restrictions

Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) recommends to all cases and contacts that they avoid public settings including childcare, school and work, until completing 5 days of an appropriate antibiotic (i.e., until day 6 after starting treatment) or until 21 days after onset of cough if antibiotics are not taken.

Case(s) Works at or Attends Childcare Facility with Children < 1 Year of age

- Notify SRHD at 324.1442. (If outside Spokane Co. contact the local health jurisdiction for your county.)
- Notify parents, staff and volunteers of the potential for exposure.
 - SRHD can provide a notification letter.
- Ask about recent cases of cough illnesses among other staff and attendees of your facility.
- Refer staff and attendees with cough illness to a healthcare provider for evaluation and recommend exclusion from your facility until pertussis has been treated or another cause of symptoms has been identified.
- Exclude all persons with confirmed or suspected pertussis. This includes everyone with a pertussis laboratory test that is positive as well as persons not tested but who have a pertussis-like cough illness. Excluded persons can return to the childcare after 5 days of antibiotics have been completed, or 21 days has passed since onset of cough, or another cause for the person's cough illness has been identified.
- Assess potential exposures that may have occurred in the facility. SRHD will recommend antibiotic prophylaxis (preventive treatment) to all childcare contacts and ensure prophylaxis to classrooms with children < 1 year of age. Asymptomatic contacts who elect not to take antibiotics or persons who are not up-to-date with their pertussis immunizations (especially infants who have not had 3 doses of a pertussis-containing vaccine) may be considered for exclusion from childcare for 21 days after their last exposure.
- Implement surveillance for additional cases of cough illness in your childcare facility for 42 days (2 incubation periods) from date of last possible exposure in the facility.
- If cases continue to occur, consult with SRHD Epidemiology (324.1442) regarding management of the situation.

Case(s) Works at or Attends Childcare Facility without Children < 1 Year of age

- Notify SRHD at 324.1442. (If outside Spokane Co. contact the local health jurisdiction for your county.)
- Notify parents, staff and volunteers of the potential exposure.
 - SRHD can provide a notification letter.
- Ask about recent cases of cough illnesses among staff and attendees of your facility.
- Refer staff and attendees with cough illness for evaluation by a healthcare provider and recommend exclusion from your facility until pertussis has been treated or another cause of symptoms has been identified.
- Exclude all persons with confirmed or suspected pertussis. This includes everyone with a pertussis laboratory test that is positive as well as persons not tested but who have a pertussis-like cough illness. Excluded persons can return to the childcare after 5 days of antibiotics have been completed, or 21 days has passed since onset of cough, or another cause for the person's cough illness has been identified.
- Antibiotic prophylaxis (preventive treatment) of all childcare contacts is recommended. Staff and attendees should consult their healthcare providers to obtain antibiotics. Exclusion of those not receiving prophylaxis may be considered.
- If multiple cases are identified:
 - Ensure that parents have been notified about the potential exposure in the childcare.
 - Implement surveillance for additional cases of cough illness in your childcare facility for 42 days (2 incubation periods) from date of last possible exposure in the facility.

Case(s) Works at or Attends an Elementary, Middle, or High School

- Notify school nurse of affected school.
- Notify SRHD at 324.1442. (If outside Spokane Co. contact the local health jurisdiction for your county.)
- Notify parents, staff and volunteers of the potential exposure.
 - SRHD can provide a notification letter.
 - For a single case:
 - In grade schools: notify the affected classroom(s).
 - In middle schools: notify the affected grade or notify school-wide as appropriate, e.g., multi-grade classes.
 - In high schools: notify the affected grade, or notify school-wide as appropriate.
 - For two or more cases in the *same* grade where the cases are in *separate* classrooms:*
 - In grade schools: notify the affected grade.
 - In middle schools: notify the affected grade.
 - In high schools: notify the affected grade or notify school-wide as appropriate.
 - For two or more cases in *separate* grades:*
 - In grade schools: notify school-wide.
 - In middle schools: notify school-wide.
 - In high schools: notify school-wide.
 - For all cases, evaluate case(s) for additional exposure settings such as before/after school Express programs, extracurricular activities including sports and clubs, specialty classes, music classes and others (e.g., Reading Buddies).
- Refer staff and attendees with cough illness to a healthcare provider for evaluation and recommend exclusion from your facility until pertussis has been treated or another cause of symptoms has been identified.
- Exclude all persons with confirmed or suspected pertussis. This includes everyone with a pertussis laboratory test that is positive as well as persons not tested but who have a pertussis-like cough illness. Excluded persons can return to the school after 5 days of antibiotics have been completed, or 21 days has passed since onset of cough, or another cause for the person's cough illness has been identified.
- If cases continue to occur:
 - Ensure that all parents have been notified.
 - Consider classroom-wide prophylaxis in classrooms with multiple cases.
 - Implement surveillance for additional cases of cough illness in the school for 42 days (2 incubation periods) from last date of possible exposure in the facility.

Case is a Healthcare Worker

- All school nurses, as well as allied health professionals (e.g., occupational therapists, speech therapists, caregivers) who work face-to-face with students, should receive (or should have already received) a dose of Tdap unless medically contraindicated.

*Outbreak Situations

- Pertussis outbreaks are defined as two or more cases clustered in time (e.g., cases that occur within 42 days of each other) and space (e.g., in a particular childcare center or classroom).
- Asymptomatic contacts who elect not to take antibiotics or persons who are not up-to-date with their pertussis immunizations may be considered for exclusion from childcare or school for 21 days after their last possible exposure in the facility.
- Please consult SRHD regarding outbreak management.

The content of this document was adapted from
the Washington Department of Health's July 2012 Public Health Investigation Guidelines for Pertussis