



Public Health & Social Services

360 NW North Street
Chehalis WA 98532

March 10, 2016

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Lewis County Public Health and Social Services has been notified there is a student at your child's school diagnosed with pertussis (whooping cough). The children are currently being treated by a physician and are no longer considered contagious.

Pertussis is an infection that affects the airways and is easily spread from person to person by coughing or sneezing. Its severe cough can last for weeks or months, sometimes leading to coughing fits and/or vomiting. Anyone can get pertussis, but it can be very dangerous for babies and people with weakened immune systems. Family members with pertussis, especially brothers and sisters, as well as mothers and fathers, can spread pertussis to babies.

Recommendations:

1. If your child has a cough:
 - Keep your child home from school and activities, such as sports or play groups. See items 4 and 5 about when your child can return to these activities.
 - Make an appointment with your child's doctor as soon as possible and tell the doctor that your child may have been exposed to pertussis.
2. If your child has been told by a doctor that they have a weakened immune system, ask your child's doctor to prescribe antibiotics to your child as soon as possible to prevent pertussis. Antibiotics should be given to a child with a weakened immune system if they may have been exposed to pertussis, even if he or she is not coughing.
3. If your child lives with any of the following people and may have been exposed to pertussis, ask your child's doctor to prescribe antibiotics as soon as possible to your child, even if he or she is not coughing:
 - A woman who is pregnant
 - A baby younger than 12 months old
 - Anyone with a weakened immune system
4. If your child has been diagnosed with pertussis by his or her doctor:
 - Tell the school that your child has been diagnosed with pertussis.
 - School officials may request that you keep your child home from school and activities, such as sports or play groups, until your child has been on antibiotics for five days to treat pertussis.
 - Ask your child's doctor for a note that states your child has pertussis.
5. If your child's doctor says your child does NOT have pertussis:
 - Ask for a note from the doctor telling the school that your child's cough is NOT pertussis and that your child can return to school and other activities at any time.

Please make sure your family's vaccinations are up-to-date. Protection against pertussis from the childhood vaccine, DTaP, decreases over time. Older children and adults, including pregnant women, should get a pertussis booster shot called "Tdap" to help protect themselves and babies near or around them. If you need Tdap, contact your doctor, pharmacy or call 360-740-1223 to find a vaccine provider near you.