

Memorandum

To: Parents/guardians of children attending Brunswick High School

From: Paul Austin, Brunswick School Department Director of Student Services and the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)

Subject: Exposure to pertussis

Date: March 4, 2015

The Maine CDC has confirmed one case of pertussis (whooping cough) diagnosed in a student that attends Brunswick High School. Although additional cases have not been reported to the CDC, we wanted to make you aware and provide you with this information on prevention.

Pertussis is an illness that is spread from one person to another through coughing. Pertussis usually begins with symptoms of a common cold (sore throat, running nose, etc.) and often develops into a bad cough after a few weeks. The cough can last for several weeks or more. Most children are vaccinated against pertussis, but it is still possible for vaccinated children to be infected. Babies are most at risk of serious illness.

To prevent the spread of pertussis in your community, we are making the following recommendations:

1. If your child has a severe cough (may include coughing to a point of gagging, vomiting after coughing or difficulty breathing) or a prolonged cough lasting 2 weeks or longer, please take your child home and contact your health care provider. If your provider suspects pertussis, they will obtain a specimen to be sent for pertussis testing.
2. Children/Adults with severe cough, prolonged cough or confirmed pertussis will be started on antibiotics and will need to remain at home for 5 days while taking these antibiotics.
3. Please check with your medical provider to be sure you and your child are up-to-date on the pertussis vaccine. Most children have had vaccine before the age of 7 years, but the immunity to the disease may gradually wane over time. Booster shots (Tdap) are now recommended for children 11-18 years old. A single Tdap shot is also recommended for adults, especially adults who have contact with infants and young children.

If you have additional questions, please contact your school nurse or the Maine Center for Disease Control at 1-800-821-5821.