

Date: _____

Dear Parents and Guardians:

A student at your child's school has recently been diagnosed with pertussis, commonly known as "whooping cough". There has been a large increase in pertussis in the Philadelphia region and across the country over the past year. Pertussis is a bacterial infection that can begin like a cold or "flu", but quickly progresses to a severe cough and sometimes cough-related vomiting. The disease is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Pertussis can affect children and adults of any age, but young children under the age of 1 year old have the most severe infections.

Pertussis can be treated with medicine and can be prevented with a vaccine (given as a shot). **Your child was identified as not being up to date with vaccinations. Please bring your child to his or her doctor for age appropriate shots.** Also, because your child may have been exposed to pertussis within the last 3 weeks, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health recommends the following:

1. If your child develops a coughing illness, have him/her evaluated by a medical provider as soon as possible. Your medical provider may do a test to check whether your child has been infected with the bacteria. This would involve a swab of the nose or throat.
2. If your child has pertussis he/she will not be allowed to return to school (or participate in any other group activity) until he/she has taken at least five days of antibiotic treatment. He/she must complete the full course of prescribed antibiotics to be fully treated.
3. Household contacts of a person with pertussis disease may need preventive antibiotics, which can be prescribed by a doctor.
4. Make sure that all children in your household are up to date with vaccines. In addition, the Tdap vaccine (tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis) is now recommended for adults and children 11 years of age and older.

If you have any questions, contact your doctor or the Division of Disease Control, Philadelphia Department of Public Health, 215-685-6740. Please share this letter with your child's doctor if your child becomes ill.