

Dear Parent or Guardian:

___ A child in our program has pertussis (whooping cough)

Date of exposure _____.

WHAT IS IT? Pertussis is caused by *Bordetella pertussis*, a bacteria. Pertussis begins with runny nose, sneezing, low grade fever, and mild cough. After a week or two, a persistent cough develops which may occur in explosive bursts (paroxysmal coughing) sometime ending in a high-pitched whoop and vomiting. In infants younger than 6 months, older children, and adults, a whoop may be absent. Coughing attacks occur more frequently at night. The coughing attacks usually increase during the first two weeks of illness, and then remain the same for two or three more weeks before gradually decreasing. Pertussis is sometimes complicated by pneumonia and ear infections, particularly in infants.

HOW IS IT SPREAD? Pertussis is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes contaminated droplets into the air and another person inhales them.

WHEN IS IT CONTAGIOUS? Pertussis is contagious at the time of early cold-like symptoms, before a persistent cough and explosive bursts of coughing develop. Persons remain contagious until three weeks after explosive bursts of coughing begin. Those treated with antibiotics are contagious until 5 days after treatment begins.

SHOULD THE CHILD STAY HOME? Until 5 days after appropriate antibiotic treatment begins. Consult your local Health Department at 565-4567 for each individual case. The disease is reportable to the local health department.

HOW CAN WE LIMIT THE SPREAD?

- Ensure that your child is fully immunized against pertussis.
- Wipe runny noses with clean tissues, throw the tissue away, then wash your hands.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow and away from people. If you cough or sneeze into your hand or tissue, wash your hands afterwards.

Taken from: Infectious diseases in child care settings.