



LAWTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

101 PRIMARY WAY • LAWTON, MICHIGAN 49065

Dear Parent/Guardian,

A student in Lawton High School and a different student in the LAAC has been diagnosed with pertussis, also known as whooping cough. As a result we are working closely with the Van Buren Cass County Health Department in response and we wish to provide you with some important information.

Pertussis can be a very serious illness, especially in the very young who haven't had the opportunity to be completely protected through immunization. The disease is caused by a bacteria that is spread through sneezing and coughing. The time between exposure to the bacteria and disease symptoms is usually between 7 - 10 days, but in rare cases it can take up to 3 weeks.

In the early stage of illness, pertussis can resemble a common cold. Symptoms include sneezing, runny nose, mild dry cough and low-grade fever. The disease is most contagious at this time. After about 1 to 2 weeks, more serious coughing spells develop that can last for more than a minute and result in difficulty breathing.

At the end of a coughing spell, the child may make a high pitched whooping sound as they try to catch -their breath. Sometimes the coughing will cause vomiting. Coughing in this latter stage of pertussis tends to be worse at night. Between spells, the child usually feels well.-

Fortunately, vaccinations against pertussis have made it a rare disease. The majority of children have been protected against it through their routine childhood immunizations. However, protection from the vaccine tends to fade over time. If your child is older than 10, they may need to receive a booster vaccine.

Please check your child's immunization records. All children should receive 5 doses of a pertussis containing vaccine (DTaP) beginning at 2 months of age, with the fifth dose given prior to entering school at age 4-6 years. A booster dose of another pertussis containing vaccine (Tdap) is recommended after the age of 10 years due to waning immunity and is available for older children and adults.

If your child is not fully protected against pertussis please contact your doctor to have them immunized.

Children who haven't completed a full course of pertussis vaccinations may be excluded from school if the disease is known to be present. Please inform the school of any updates in your child's immunization record so they can be documented and to prevent such exclusions.

Pertussis can be treated or even prevented with antibiotics if detected early or before the disease has started.

If your child has been exposed please contact your health care provider for protective treatment. If your child does develop any of the symptoms described above, keep him or her at home and contact your doctor immediately. Please also inform the school of any illness.

If you have any questions about this issue please contact the Van Buren County Health Department at 269-621-3143. More information is also available at www.cdc.gov/Features/Pertussis/.

Thank you,
Chris Rice



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