



# MEQUON-THIENSVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT

CITY OF MEQUON AND VILLAGE OF THIENSVILLE

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November 29, 2011

Dear Parents,

We have been notified that there have been four confirmed cases of Pertussis (Whooping Cough) identified in the City of Mequon. While none of the confirmed cases are students who attend the Mequon-Thiensville School District, it is important to note that our students share busses with children who attend private schools in the area and who may be affected.

Pertussis is a very contagious disease that is spread from person to person, usually through coughing or sneezing. It often starts with cold-like symptoms and a mild cough and fever. After one to two weeks, severe coughing can begin that, unlike the common cold, can be violent and rapid. You can get more information at the Center for Disease Control website at <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/index.html>.

If your child exhibits any of the signs or symptoms of whooping cough, please have them checked by your healthcare provider before sending them to school.

The district is in contact with the Ozaukee Public Health Department regarding this situation and has taken additional precautions, including sanitizing all of the district's busses, in an effort to kill the bacteria.

We will provide you with additional information as it becomes available. In the meantime, please contact the district's nurse, Deanne Landvatter, at 262-238-7932 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Hughes B. George

Director of Pupil Services

# Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

## Causes

Pertussis, a respiratory illness commonly known as whooping cough, is a very contagious disease caused by a type of bacteria called *Bordetella pertussis*. These bacteria attach to the cilia (tiny, hair-like extensions) that line part of the upper respiratory system. The bacteria release toxins, which damage the cilia and cause inflammation (swelling).

## Transmission

Pertussis is a very contagious disease only found in humans and is spread from person to person. People with pertussis usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria. Most of pertussis usually develop within 7 – 10 days after being exposed, but sometimes not for as long as 6 weeks.

Pertussis vaccines are very effective in protecting you from disease but no vaccine is 100% effective. If pertussis is circulating in the community, there is a chance that a fully vaccinated person, of any age, can catch this very contagious disease. If you have been vaccinated, the infection is usually less severe. If you or your child develops a cold that includes a severe cough or a cough that lasts for a long time, it may be pertussis. The best way to know is to contact your doctor.

## Signs and Symptoms

Pertussis (whooping cough) can cause serious illness in infants, children and adults. The disease usually starts with cold-like symptoms and maybe a mild cough or fever. After 1 to 2 weeks, severe coughing can begin. Unlike the common cold, pertussis can become a series of coughing fits that continues for weeks.

Pertussis can cause violent and rapid coughing, over and over, until the air is gone from the lungs and you are forced to inhale with a loud "whooping" sound. This extreme coughing can cause you to throw up and be very tired. The "whoop" is often not there and the infection is generally milder (less severe) in teens and adults, especially those who have been vaccinated.

Early symptoms can last for 1 to 2 weeks and usually include:

- Runny nose
- Low-grade fever (generally minimal throughout the course of the disease)
- Mild, occasional cough

(CDC, 2011)

If your child is showing any of these symptoms, please have them evaluated by their doctor.