

February 9, 2009

Information for Parents/Guardians:

It has been brought to our attention that a substitute teacher, who recently worked at the high school, has been diagnosed with pertussis (whooping cough). The Allegheny Health Department has been notified and appropriate treatment has been initiated. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, this is a contagious and fairly common bacterial infection that causes a mild to severe cough. Whooping cough is spread through the air from coughing and sneezing or direct contact with the mouth and nose secretions of the infected individual.

Pertussis usually begins with cold-like symptoms that may progressively increase in severity over a one- to two-week period. There is usually **NO FEVER** with pertussis. Please contact your physician if your child would happen to show any of the following signs/symptoms;

- Coughing that may progress to severe coughing, which may cause vomiting, loss of breath, or difficulty breathing
- Whooping (high pitched crowing sound) when breathing in after a period of coughing

Since pertussis is such a highly communicable disease, any student diagnosed must be placed on an appropriate antibiotic treatment by his/her physician and excluded from school for 5 days. A physician's note is needed that states when the antibiotic treatment was prescribed and when the student may return to school.

A new combination tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis vaccine (Tdap) is now available for use in adolescents and adults. It is recommended for use in all 11- and 12-year-olds and 15-year-olds at high school entry. In adults under 65 years of age, Tdap should be given as a one time dose in place of a Td. There is no pertussis vaccine approved for adults aged 65 years and older. For more information please contact the Allegheny County Health Department at 412-578-8062 or click on the following link: <http://www.achd.net/factsheet/pert.htm>.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding pertussis, please contact the nurse at your child's school. She will have the information on hand to address questions.