



February 8, 2019

Dear Parent/Guardian:

A case of whooping cough has been identified at North Central High School.

Anyone who attended or visited North Central High School between the dates of 1/31/19 – 2/7/19, may have been exposed to whooping cough.

Whooping cough is a contagious disease that affects the nose, throat, windpipe, and lungs. It spreads easily by coughing or sneezing. People with whooping cough may have coughing fits. They might throw up after coughing. The severe cough can last for weeks or months. [Babies may have a symptom known as "apnea." Apnea is a pause in the child's breathing pattern.]

Whooping cough can be dangerous for babies and for people with lung diseases or weakened immune systems. Adults and adolescents may have milder symptoms of whooping cough but they can spread their infection to babies who may become severely ill.

The best way to prevent whooping cough is through vaccination. The childhood vaccine is called DTaP and the whooping cough booster vaccine for adolescents and adults is called Tdap. Children should get 5 doses of DTaP, one dose at each of the following ages: 2, 4, 6, and 15-18 months and 4-6 years. Adolescents 11 through 18 years of age (preferably at age 11-12 years) should receive a single dose of Tdap. One dose of Tdap is also recommended for adults 19 years of age and older who did not get Tdap as an adolescent. Talk to your health care provider about whether you and your child are up to date on pertussis vaccinations.

Recommendations from DHEC:

1. If **any** of the following apply to the person who was exposed to whooping cough, contact your health care provider right away:
 - She is a woman who is pregnant
 - He or she is an infant younger than 12 months old
 - He or she has a weakened immune system
 - He or she has a severe lung disease
 - He or she lives with an infant under 12 months old, with a pregnant woman, or with someone with severe lung disease or a weakened immune system
 - **Show this letter to your health care provider. Ask him or her about antibiotics to protect the exposed person from getting whooping cough. (read more on the next page)**

2. If the exposed person has a cough now, or starts coughing in the next 3 weeks, the coughing person should:

- Stay home from group activities such as work, school, sports or playgroups, church, etc. The coughing person may be contagious with whooping cough.
- **Make an appointment with a health care provider as soon as possible.** Tell the provider about the cough and about the possible exposure to whooping cough.
- Bring this letter with you to your appointment.
- **If your health care provider says that you or your child has whooping cough the following are recommended to prevent spread from the person with whooping cough:**
 - Stay home from work, school, childcare, until antibiotics have been taken for at least 5 days.
 - Do not go to other activities, such as sports or playgroups, shopping, concerts, etc. during that time.
 - Avoid having visitors during the first 5 days of antibiotics.
 - Be sure that the person with whooping cough covers his/her mouth and nose with tissue when coughing or sneezing. The used tissue should be thrown away in the waste basket. Most important, the coughing person should wash his or her hands often.
 - Ask your health care provider for a note for school, childcare or work stating that you or your child has whooping cough. When your health care provider says that you or your child can no longer spread the infection, please ask them for a note stating that it's okay to return to work, school, childcare, and other activities.

If you have any questions, please contact the Midlands Region Public Health Epidemiology Office at 803-576-2765.

Sincerely,



G. Potter, MD, Region Medical Director
Midlands Public Health Region