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**Office of Public Health**

**Public Health Advisory**

**Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Cases Identified in Montgomery County  
Residents  
December 12, 2018**

**Background:**

Montgomery County Office of Public Health (OPH) has been receiving reports of Montgomery County school-aged individuals being clinically diagnosed and/or laboratory confirmed with a diagnosis of pertussis. Because pertussis is a very contagious disease transmitted person to person through respiratory droplets, OPH wants to remind the healthcare provider community about the appropriate recommendations for the evaluation, testing, and treatment of pertussis cases and their close contacts.

**Clinical Evaluation:**

**In accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH), OPH recommends the following:**

- 1) Consider pertussis when evaluating any infant, child, youth, or adult with an acute cough illness characterized by prolonged cough or cough with paroxysms, whoop, or post-tussive gagging/vomiting. Infants may present with apnea and/or cyanosis. The incubation period of pertussis is commonly 7 to 10 days, with a range of 5 to 21 days.
- 2) A review of patient's vaccination records should be completed. Individuals entering into kindergarten should have 5 doses of a pertussis containing vaccine and receive the 6th dose when they are 11-12 yrs. of age.
- 3) **Children diagnosed with pertussis will not be permitted to attend school until 5 days after starting appropriate antibiotics.** If their medical condition allows, students may return to school 5 days after starting the antibiotics and must continue taking the antibiotics until completed.
- 4) All household members and close contacts of a pertussis case should receive preventative antibiotics regardless of their age or vaccination status. The goal is to prevent cough and other symptoms associated with pertussis before they start.

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**Testing Recommendations:**

Whenever possible, clinicians should obtain a nasopharyngeal (NP) swab or aspirate within two weeks of cough onset.

**Treatment:**

Persons with pertussis are infectious from the beginning of the catarrhal stage through the third week after the onset of paroxysms or until 5 days after the start of effective antimicrobial treatment. The recommended antimicrobial agents for treatment or chemoprophylaxis of pertussis are azithromycin, clarithromycin, and erythromycin.

Early treatment of pertussis is very important. The earlier a person, especially an infant, starts treatment the better. If a patient starts treatment for pertussis early (catarrhal stage) in the course of illness, during the first 1 to 2 weeks before coughing paroxysms occur, symptoms may be lessened. Clinicians should strongly consider treating prior to test results if clinical history is strongly suggestive or patient is at risk for severe or complicated disease (e.g., infants). If a clinician diagnoses the patient late, antibiotics will not alter the course of the illness and, even without antibiotics, the patient should no longer be spreading pertussis.

**Notification to the Local Health Authority:**

Pertussis is reportable to OPH under Chapter 3 of the Montgomery County Public Health Code and PA Code, Title 28, Chapter 27. The OPH would recommend that health care providers who evaluate all suspected or confirmed cases immediately report to OPH's Division of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention at **610-278-5117** or through PA-NEDSS, Pennsylvania's version of the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System.

For guidance on Epidemiology and Prevention of Pertussis:

<https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/index.html>

