



January 26, 2012

Dear Parent/Guardian:

An individual at the Fleming School has been diagnosed with Pertussis (whooping cough). This brings the total number of confirmed cases of Pertussis at Fleming School to five this year. Pertussis is a contagious disease that is spread through the air when infected people cough. While immunization protects most children during the elementary school years, protection from the vaccine lessens over time. Pertussis can occur in fully immunized individuals.

Pertussis begins with cold symptoms and an irritating cough, which usually becomes increasingly severe over 1-2 weeks. Symptoms often include a long series of coughs, sometimes followed by a whooping noise. However, older children, adults and very young infants may not develop the whoop. Vomiting may occur after a coughing episode. There is generally no fever.

Antibiotic treatment early in the disease may decrease the severity of symptoms and reduce the infectiousness of the ill person. Antibiotics are also recommended for close contacts of pertussis cases in order to prevent them from contracting and/or transmitting the disease.

Please consider the following Vermont Department of Health recommendations:

1. Close contacts, including household members, of persons diagnosed with pertussis should receive a protective course of antibiotics to prevent additional infections. Usual classroom contact of school aged children is **not** considered close contact unless additional activities, such as participation on the same sports team, have occurred. A Public Health Nurse will investigate to identify close contacts and refer them to their health care providers.
2. If your child has any of the above symptoms or a cough lasting more than a week, contact your health care provider to have your child evaluated for pertussis.
3. Children or staff with confirmed or suspected pertussis should be excluded from school until they have completed **5 days** of the antibiotic treatment for pertussis.
4. The Vermont Department of Health recommends that all adolescents, ages 11-18 years, receive a single (booster) dose of Tdap vaccine. **Adults**, especially those who have, or anticipate having, close contact with an infant **should receive a single dose of Tdap vaccine**. Please consult your child's/your health care provider.
5. Children less than 1 year old, particularly infants under 6 months of age, are most likely to experience severe illness if they develop pertussis. When possible, young infants should be kept away from people with a cough. **Babies with any coughing illness or choking episodes should be promptly evaluated by their physician.**

Please notify the school nurse (872-3293) or health department personnel if anyone in your household is diagnosed with confirmed or possible pertussis. If you have any questions, please call the Vermont Department of Health at (802) 863-7323 or 863-7240.