



# County of San Diego

**NICK MACCHIONE, FACHE**  
DIRECTOR

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES  
3851 ROSECRANS STREET, MAIL STOP P-578  
SAN DIEGO, CA 92110-3134  
(619) 531-5800 • FAX (619) 542-4186

**WILMA J. WOOTEN, M.D., M.P.H.**  
PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

December 12, 2016

**Dear Parent/Guardian,**

This letter will update you about recent cases of Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, occurring at San Pasqual High School and the steps you should take to protect the health of your child and your family. On November 7, 2016 the school principal informed you about an individual at your school diagnosed with Pertussis and that your child may have been exposed. Because of the diligence of the school staff and other parents, 5 more members of the school community have been confirmed to have this contagious disease. Your child may have been exposed at any time after November, 2016. We recommend the following actions to reduce the risk of illness:

**Be aware of the symptoms:**

1. *Middle school, high school students and adults:* Include cold-like symptoms (sneezing, occasional cough) that progress to coughing attacks that may be accompanied by vomiting, gagging, and sticky mucus production. These attacks may worsen at night. Between the coughing attacks, the person may feel well and have no symptoms. Symptoms may last for two weeks or longer.
2. *Infants and younger children:* Most often include cold symptoms such as runny nose, slight fever, and occasional cough. The cough becomes worse, turning into coughing spasms that may be followed by one or more of the following: a crowing (whooping) sound on breathing in, vomiting or gagging, and choking or turning blue.

**If your child starts to show symptoms of Pertussis:**

1. Consult your healthcare provider and let them know your child may have been exposed to someone ill with Pertussis. Bring this letter when you visit your provider and show the reverse side of this letter.
2. Notify the school if your doctor suspects your child has Pertussis. Ill children should stay home until completion of five days of antibiotic therapy to prevent spreading the disease to others.
3. If your doctor suspects your child has pertussis, be sure that all members of your household are treated to prevent the disease. Pertussis can be very dangerous for infants and people with weakened immune systems. Family members with pertussis can spread pertussis to newborns. Because no vaccine is 100% protective, even immunized persons can become ill with Pertussis, but the symptoms are usually milder.

**If your child has no symptoms, protect against getting ill from Pertussis:**

1. Check with your doctor to see if you and your family are up to date with the appropriate number of DTaP (childhood) or Tdap (adolescent and adult) vaccine doses.
2. Wash hands frequently.
3. Consult your doctor if you or your child have been in close contact with a confirmed case of Pertussis. The normal, casual contact of students in a school is not considered close contact. A close contact is someone who:

- had direct contact with respiratory secretions (like from coughing or sneezing) from a person with Pertussis,
- lives in the same household,
- has had prolonged face-to-face contact, or
- shared a small space for a long period of time with an infected person.

Antibiotics may be recommended to prevent Pertussis in close contacts, especially household members of cases and contacts who are infants or contacts of infants.

Please visit [www.vaccineinformation.org/video/pertussis.asp](http://www.vaccineinformation.org/video/pertussis.asp) or [www.sdiz.org](http://www.sdiz.org) to learn more about Pertussis. If you have any additional questions regarding Pertussis, you may call the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Epidemiology and Immunization Services Branch at 1-866-358-2966 and press 5 to speak with a Public Health Nurse.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eric C. McDonald". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eric" and last name "McDonald" clearly legible.

ERIC C. MCDONALD, M.D., M.P.H.  
Medical Director  
Epidemiology & Immunizations Services Branch  
Health and Human Services Agency



# County of San Diego

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES  
3851 ROSECRANS, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92110  
(619) 531-5800 FAX (619) 542-4186  
EPIDEMIOLOGY & IMMUNIZATION SERVICES BRANCH  
TEL: 619-692-8499 FAX: 858-715-6458

## Dear Medical Professional,

Your patient attends San Pasqual High School and may have been exposed to pertussis. Six confirmed cases have been reported at the school with symptom onset since November 2016. The following **recommendations** are provided to assist you in making clinical decisions:

### **For Exposed Patients without Symptoms:**

1. Recommend antibiotic prophylaxis for any patient who reports being a **close contact** of a known case. Antimicrobial agents and dosing for post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) are the same as for treatment of pertussis.
2. PEP is not routinely recommended for individuals who are not close contacts of a known case, but consider offering PEP if your patient or household member of your patient is at increased risk for morbidity from pertussis. More information about Pertussis treatment and PEP is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/clinical/index.html>

### **For Exposed Patients with Symptoms and Cough <21 days:**

1. Collect nasopharyngeal swabs or aspirate for pertussis PCR testing and/or culture.
2. Treat presumptively with appropriate antibiotics while waiting for laboratory results if there is no alternative diagnosis.
3. Document and communicate all clinical decisions related to pertussis to the school (this includes children for whom pertussis has been ruled out).
4. Recommend antibiotic prophylaxis for all household members regardless of age or immunization status. This is especially important for pregnant women, and infants less than 12 months old, or anyone with a weakened immune system.
5. Report all suspected and confirmed pertussis cases promptly to the San Diego County Immunization Program via Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) by FAX to 619-692-5677 or by calling 866-358-2966 (select option #5).

### **For Exposed Patients with Symptoms and Cough ≥21 days:**

1. Testing for pertussis is not recommended. Testing after 3 weeks of cough is of limited benefit since PCR and culture are only sensitive during the first 2-3 weeks of cough when bacterial DNA is still present in the nasopharynx.
2. Treatment is no longer necessary after 21 days, with the following exception: infants and pregnant women in their third trimester should be treated up through 6 weeks after cough onset.
3. The patient is no longer infectious and can return to school.

**For ALL households:** Verify that all household members are up-to-date with recommended vaccinations for pertussis and administer the appropriate vaccine (DTaP or Tdap) for those who are not current.

If you have any questions, please call County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Epidemiology and Immunization Services at 1-866-358-2966 and press 5 to speak with a Public Health Nurse.