5-18-2018

Dear Parent/Guardian/Staff of **Fern Ridge Middle School**:

It is the Fern Ridge School District's policy to inform parents when potential health concerns arise in our schools. This letter is to inform you that at least1 individual has been diagnosed with **Pertussis (whooping cough)** at <u>Fern Ridge Middle School</u>. We are obliged by law to keep the identity of the ill individuals confidential. **This is NOT a medical emergency**. The Lane County Health Department, in partnership with school officials, is responding to the situation.

Lane County Health Department recommends the following:
1. **If your child has symptoms of pertussis - as described below - please keep them home from school and consult with their health care provider. Tell your provider that your child may have been exposed to pertussis.**
2. **Ensure your child is up to date on his or her immunizations. Contact your health care provider or school to review vaccine records.**
3. **If you are pregnant and have contact with <u>Fern Ridge Middle School</u>, call your health care provider to discuss prevention options during pregnancy.**

What is Pertussis?
Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a contagious disease of the respiratory tract, caused by bacteria found in the mouth, nose, and throat of an infected person. Pertussis is spread through direct contact with nose and throat mucus and airborne droplets.

Pertussis can occur at any age, but infants and young children are at the highest risk of life-threatening consequences.

Immunization is the most effective way to prevent the spread of this illness. Handwashing and good respiratory etiquette are also helpful in preventing the spread of this infection.

Symptoms:
Symptoms of pertussis include cold-like symptoms followed in one to two weeks by coughing fits that can keep coming for weeks to months. During coughing attacks, young children may gag, gasp or strain to inhale, and/ or make the high-pitched whooping/ barking sound. This may be followed by vomiting or exhaustion. Fever is usually absent or minimal.

Treatment and Prevention:
Pertussis is treated with antibiotics, usually for 5 days.

Women in the third trimester of pregnancy, children 1 year or younger, and other high risk individuals should also be on close watch for early pertussis symptoms including any cold like symptoms. Medication may be necessary to prevent infection or to decrease the risk of spreading the infection to newborns. Please reach out to your healthcare provider and let them know if you have been exposed to pertussis to see if medication is recommended.

Immunization is the most effective way to prevent pertussis. Children need a series of five DTaP vaccinations starting at two months of age until kindergarten. Adolescents (age 11-12 y.o.) and adults need a Tdap booster vaccine. Women should receive a dose of Tdap during the third trimester of each pregnancy.

Recommendations:
- · If your child has symptoms of pertussis, keep them at home, consult their health care provider, call the school, and contact the Health Department.
- · Now is a good time to review your child's immunization record to see if they are current on all vaccinations and get them up to date.
- · Pregnant women should receive pertussis vaccine preferably between 27 and 36 weeks' gestation, so that they can develop antibodies to pertussis and pass them to their babies before birth.
- · Pregnant women, children 1 year or younger, and other high risk individuals that have been exposed to someone with pertussis should call his or her health care provider as soon as possible to see if medication is recommended.

When sick with infectious illnesses, remember that frequent handwashing with soap and water, staying home, and covering your coughs and sneeze will prevent others from getting sick.

Resources:
http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/DISEASESCONDITIONS/DISEASESAZ/Pages/pertussis.aspx

If you have further questions, please call Lane County Public Health 541-682-4041.

Sincerely,
Patrick Luedtke, MD, MPH
Health Officer
Lane County Public Health Department