

October 31, 2019

Dear Parent,

Recently the Washoe County Health District became aware of a student at Damonte Ranch High School that was diagnosed with pertussis ("whooping cough"). At this time, the case is not associated with the outbreak of pertussis at Bishop Manogue Catholic High School. As a precaution and to keep you informed we are sending this letter to provide information about pertussis and how it can be prevented.

Pertussis is an illness caused by a type of bacteria called *Bordetella pertussis*. Early symptoms of pertussis can include mild cough, runny nose, and low-grade fever. Over the course of 1-2 weeks the cough may worsen to paroxysms (fits) of many, rapid coughs and vomiting during or after coughing fits. A "whoop" noise is sometimes heard after these coughing fits. Babies may have an additional symptom called apnea (a pause in their breathing). Pertussis is often milder in teens and adults, especially among those who have been vaccinated.

Signs and symptoms of pertussis commonly appear 7-10 days after an exposure with a range of 4-21 days. Persons at a higher risk for severe illness include infants, pregnant women, and persons with a weakened immune system. Pertussis can be severe and potentially life threatening to babies and young children; about half of babies younger than 1 year old who get pertussis need care in the hospital. Complications among infants and young children can include pneumonia, seizures, and encephalopathy (disease of the brain). Teens and adults can also develop complications but they are usually less serious, especially in those who have been vaccinated. Complications in this older age group can include difficulty sleeping, pneumonia, and rib fracture. Pertussis is spread from person to person by coughing or sneezing. Persons with pertussis are infectious to others for the first 3 weeks after cough onset or until they have completed an appropriate antibiotic treatment.

Pertussis can be prevented with a pertussis-containing vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends pertussis vaccine for children, teens, and adults. Pregnant women should also receive pertussis vaccine during each pregnancy. Please check your child's immunizations as well as your own immunizations. If you or your children are not fully immunized please contact your healthcare provider. You may also contact the Washoe County Health District by **calling 775-328-2402 Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. to schedule an immunization appointment.** Other preventative measures include covering coughs and sneezes and frequent handwashing. Preventative antibiotics are sometimes given to contacts following an exposure to pertussis; however, they are typically recommended for household contacts to a pertussis case or contacts at high risk for serious disease.

If your child has developed or does develop signs or symptoms of pertussis between October 14, 2019-November 20, 2019, please contact your healthcare provider and let them know your child may have been exposed to pertussis. Your child should be kept home from school or other activities until they have been evaluated by their doctor. If your doctor diagnoses your child with pertussis they must remain home from school and other activities until they have completed 5 days of an appropriate antibiotic treatment to prevent the infection from spreading to others. Please also notify the Washoe County Health District at 775-328-2447. Additional information about pertussis can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/index.html>. If you have questions or concerns you may also contact the Washoe County Health District at 775-328-2447.

Sincerely,



Subject: Chickenpox

Date: 12/14/17

Page 2 of 2

Randall Todd, DrPH | Director, Division of Epidemiology and Public Health Preparedness