

# ALERT: Pertussis in Havelock

September 3, 2014

The Peterborough County-City Health Unit has investigated eight cases of pertussis in the past two months. Three of the cases are laboratory confirmed and the remaining are epidemiologically linked to a laboratory-confirmed case. All cases are linked to the Havelock area.

The Health Unit is sending a letter today to staff and parents/guardians of students in Havelock Public School. In the letter, students will be advised to:

- stay home from school if unwell;
- see their healthcare provider if a cough lasts longer than a week or if symptoms are severe to get an accurate diagnosis and to make sure infected individuals get treatment; and
- determine if students/staff and their families are adequately immunized for pertussis and if not, update their immunization from their healthcare provider.

If pertussis is suspected in a patient:

- obtain a nasopharyngeal specimen using the *Bordetella pertussis* BP collection kit. Label the container with two identifiers and place specimen in biohazard bag and seal. Specimens should be stored at 2-8°C following collection and shipped to PHOL on ice packs. Maximum storage/transit time is within five days of collection. Specimens should be collected during the acute phase of illness. Check the expiry date of the swab before using. To obtain swabs, call the Public Health Laboratory at (705)743-6811 or fax an order form which can be downloaded from [www.publichealthontario.ca](http://www.publichealthontario.ca) ---go to services and tools/laboratories/test requisition forms/requisition for specimen container and supplies);
- report suspect or confirmed cases to the Health Unit (705)743-1000;
- treatment with antibiotics is under the direction of the attending healthcare provider. Antibiotics should be administered as soon as possible after onset of illness; there is no limit to the start date for treatment of symptomatic, untreated cases of pertussis whose culture or PCR results are positive. Cases are no longer considered infectious after five days of treatment;
- provide education about transmission of infection and proper respiratory etiquette;
- advise cases to avoid contact with young children, infants, and women in their third trimester of pregnancy, especially those who have not been immunized, until the completion of five days of appropriate antibiotic therapy or 21 days post-cough onset;
- advise symptomatic individuals to remain at home until they are well (or have completed antibiotic therapy for five days); and
- advise that a Public Health Nurse will contact them for follow-up.

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For contacts of cases, there is no evidence that antibiotic prophylaxis changes the epidemic course of pertussis in the community. Therefore, it is only recommended for the following contacts of confirmed pertussis cases who are:

- household contacts (including attendees at family day care centers) where there is a vulnerable person defined as an infant less than 1 year of age [vaccinated or not] or a pregnant woman in the third trimester; and/or
- for out-of-household exposures, vulnerable persons, defined as infants less than 1 year of age [vaccinated or not] and pregnant women in her third trimester who have had face-to-face exposure and/or have shared confined air for more than 1 hour

The Health Unit will identify persons who meet the contact definition above and advise them about chemoprophylaxis and refer them to their physician for prescriptions. Prophylaxis is the same as treatment and should be given within 21 days after exposure.

To order vaccine, please call Zina Allen or Cathy Schofield at (705)743-1000.

If you have questions, please call Vaccine Preventable Disease Nurses at (705)743-1000.

## **Resources:**

[Infectious Disease Protocol, 2013](http://www.health.gov.on.ca) ([www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca), search for “Infectious Disease Protocol” and then search alphabetical listing for pertussis)

[Public Health Ontario Laboratory Testing Information](http://www.publichealthontario.ca) ([www.publichealthontario.ca](http://www.publichealthontario.ca) and search for “Bordetella-Respiratory”)

[Caring For Kids \(Canadian Pediatric Society\)](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca) ([www.caringforkids.cps.ca](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca) and search for “pertussis”)

[Public Health Agency of Canada](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca) ([www.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca) and search for “pertussis”)