

September 10, 2012

TO: Parents and Teachers of Commodore Option's Program

FROM: Scott W. Lindquist, MD, MPH

SUBJECT: **PERTUSSIS CONFIRMED**

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, has been confirmed in your child's school. *See page 2 for recommendations specific for teachers and students.*

WHAT IS PERTUSSIS?

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a bacterial infection of the respiratory tract. It gets its name from the whooping sound that often follows a coughing spell. Pertussis is spread by direct or close contact with mouth and nose secretions (coughing, sneezing) of an infected person. The illness causes a range of symptoms, from a mild cough to severe disease. *Infants under one year of age are at the highest risk for severe disease and life-threatening complications.*

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Begins with mild, upper respiratory tract symptoms such as a runny nose, slight cough, mild fever.
- Coughing episodes gradually worsens over one to two weeks and may cause
 - ~ Gagging and vomiting;
 - ~ Loss of breath and difficulty breathing;
 - ~ Turning blue.
- Cough is often worse at night and may continue for weeks.

INCUBATION AND CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

- Incubation period: 6 to 21 days; usually 7 to 10 days after exposure.
- Contagious period: from the beginning of symptoms until 2 weeks after the cough begins if untreated. If an appropriate antibiotic is taken, the person is no longer contagious after completing 5 days of the antibiotic.

MAKE SURE YOU AND YOUR CHILD ARE FULLY IMMUNIZED – “the best way to protect our infants”

- Children should receive all age-appropriate vaccine doses – check with your healthcare provider.
- Adults need a one-time dose of Tdap vaccine.
- Pregnant women who have not previously been vaccinated with Tdap should get one dose after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

PERSONS HAVING SYMPTOMS OF PERTUSSIS SHOULD SEEK A MEDICAL EVALUATION

- Stay home and contact your health care provider - take this letter with you to your appointment.
- It is important that your doctor *test and treat* you/your child with antibiotics if he or she suspects pertussis – *regardless of vaccination status* –
- Stay home until 5 full days of treatment have been completed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Students and Teachers
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1. **WE DO NOT RECOMMEND PREVENTIVE MEDICATION FOR STAFF OR STUDENTS.**
2. Children and staff should be monitored closely for respiratory symptoms (i.e., cough illness) for the next 21 days.
3. If you or your child has symptoms of pertussis:
 - Stay home and contact your health care provider - take this letter with you to your appointment.
 - It is important that your doctor *test and treat* you/your child with antibiotics if pertussis is suspected – regardless of vaccination status –
 - Stay home until 5 full days of treatment have been completed.
4. **IF YOU ARE IN THE FOLLOWING GROUPS** and know you have had close contact with a person with pertussis either now or in the future, it is especially important to contact your health care provider for antibiotic treatment to prevent pertussis:
 - Infants under 1 year of age;
 - Pregnant women in their third trimester;
 - Close contacts of the above, including health care workers.

Note to health care providers: Immunity from pertussis vaccine or active disease wanes over time. Even fully immunized persons can develop pertussis. If clinical symptoms are consistent with pertussis, test and treat regardless of vaccination status.