



Henderson County Department of Public Health

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Dear Colleague:

A student in Henderson county has recently tested positive for pertussis. We are currently identifying and reaching out to individuals who meet the definition of "close contact". When we speak to them, if the individual has no symptoms and is determined to be high risk or is in close contact with someone who is high risk, we are offering prophylaxis. ***However, if the individual is symptomatic, we are referring the individual to their provider for evaluation and treatment.***

For exposed patients WITHOUT symptoms:

If your patient has a pre-existing health condition that may be exacerbated by a pertussis infection (including but not limited to immunocompromising conditions or moderate to severe medically treated asthma), he or she is considered to be at risk of severe illness or complications from pertussis and CDC recommends antibiotic prophylaxis. To protect vulnerable individuals, CDC also recommends antibiotic prophylaxis for your patient if he or she shares a household or has close contact with an individual at risk of severe illness or complications, a woman who is in her third trimester of pregnancy or an infant less than 12 months old. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/outbreaks/PEP.html>.

Exposed patients who do not meet the criteria for prophylaxis should self-monitor for symptoms for 21 days following their last exposure. Instruct these patients to call if they develop symptoms.

For exposed patients WITH symptoms:

Anyone with pertussis should not attend childcare, school, work, church, sporting events or visit public places until they have completed five days of an appropriate antibiotic treatment. Please counsel your patients appropriately. Guidance can be found on the CDC website, <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/clinical/treatment.html>.

We recommend the following steps for assessing and treating patients with possible pertussis infection:

For patients coughing <21 days:

1. **Before treating, collect nasopharyngeal swabs with a polyester-tipped swab for pertussis PCR.** Most labs are able to complete this testing. Please contact your reference lab or local hospital lab for more information.
2. If you suspect your patient has pertussis, do not delay treatment with appropriate antibiotics and prophylax household contacts while waiting for laboratory results.
3. If you suspect or diagnose pertussis **instruct your patient to remain at home until he or she has completed five days of antibiotic treatment or has been coughing for 21 days, whichever comes first.** Exclusion from school or other group activities is the primary way to decrease the spread of pertussis. Isolation orders can be issued for patients who do not comply with these instructions.
4. **If pertussis is suspected, notify the health department within 24 hours.** Consider antibiotic prophylaxis for all household members. Prophylaxis might also be recommended for other close contacts who are at risk for severe illness or close contacts who live in households that include someone else at risk for severe illness, a woman who is in her third trimester of pregnancy or an infant less than 12 months old.

For patients coughing ≥21 days:

1. **Testing for pertussis is not recommended.** Testing after 21 days of cough is of limited benefit since PCR and culture are not likely to detect pertussis. Commercially available serology tests for pertussis can yield false negative or false positive results.
2. Generally, treatment is no longer necessary after 21 days. Infants and pregnant women in their third trimester should be treated if antibiotics can be started within 6 weeks after cough onset.
3. Patients are no longer considered to be infectious after 21 days of cough and can return to school.

For ALL households

Administer Tdap vaccine to contacts 11 years and older who have not been previously vaccinated with Tdap, or refer for vaccination to another provider or the local health department.

Additional clinical and laboratory guidance may be found on the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis>. Should you have any questions or concerns, please call the Henderson County Department of Public Health (828) 691-1309.

Sincerely,

Steven E. Smith, MPA
Henderson County Health Director
Henderson County Department of Public Health