

TO: Parents/Guardians, Staff
FROM : BLUM ISD
SUBJECT: Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

The Texas Department of State Health Services is currently investigating a confirmed case of pertussis in your child's school. Pertussis is caused by bacteria infecting the mouth, nose, and throat. It is spread through the air by cough. Pertussis is usually mild in older children and adults, but often causes serious problems in babies under 1 year of age.

Pertussis symptoms appear five to twenty-one days after infection. Usually only close contacts of students with pertussis become infected. Pertussis begins with cold-like symptoms (sneezing and a runny nose) and a cough that gradually becomes worse. After one to two weeks, the cough usually occurs in strong "coughing fits." In young children, this is often followed by a whooping noise as they try to catch their breath. After coughing, a person may have difficulty catching their breath, vomit, or become blue in the face from lack of air. Between coughing spells, the person may appear well. There is generally no fever. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help reduce the coughing. Coughing fits can last six weeks or longer. Adults, teens, and vaccinated children often have milder symptoms similar to bronchitis or asthma.

Please consider the following Texas Department of State Health Services recommendations:

- 1. If your child has not been vaccinated with Tdap vaccine, talk to your child's doctor about the benefits of this vaccine.**
- 2. If your child comes down with cold symptoms that include a cough, talk to your child's doctor. Tell the doctor that pertussis has been reported in your child's school. Report possible pertussis infections to the school nurse or health department.**
- 3. Babies under one year of age are most likely to have severe illness. When possible, babies should be kept away from people with a cough. Any baby with a coughing illness should be seen by their doctor as soon as possible.**
- 4. If you have children less than 7 years of age who have not been completely vaccinated for pertussis (with DTP or DTaP) (particularly babies under one year of age), talk to your child's doctor about the benefits of vaccination.**

For more information about pertussis, see the following web sites or contact the Texas Department of State Health Services, Immunization Division at (254) 778-6744, x2416.

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/downloads/pert.pdf>