

08 September 2011

Dear Parents

Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

A confirmed case of whooping cough (pertussis) has been reported at Bradfordville Primary School. I am writing to provide advice and to ask that you watch out for the symptoms of whooping cough in your child.

Whooping cough is a highly contagious bacterial disease that can be readily spread by direct contact with droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person. Whooping cough can cause bouts of coughing, and sometimes breathing difficulties and vomiting. **Older children and adults may just have a mild cough that doesn't go away and can last for many weeks.**

What should people sick with pertussis do?

If your child develops symptoms, please take your child and this letter to your local doctor as soon as possible. Your doctor can advise whether whooping cough is likely and arrange for early treatment if needed.

To reduce the spread, children and adults who have whooping cough should not attend the school until they have completed 5 days of the recommended antibiotics. If antibiotics can not be taken, then they need to stay away for 3 weeks after the onset of the cough.

How is it prevented?

It is important to double check that your child is fully up to date with their immunisations against pertussis. If in doubt, please ask your doctor to check.

Immunity to whooping cough from immunisation or infection is not life lasting. It is therefore important to seek medical attention if your child develops a cough even if fully immunised.

If symptoms develop please take this letter and see your doctor ASAP. A course of antibiotics may be required prior to returning to school. A pathology test may also be required. (Nasopharyngeal or throat swab is the preferred specimen). **Please do not attend school until pathology result is known.**

A fact sheet with more information is available at <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/PublicHealth/Infectious/whoopingcough/index.asp> or call the Infectious Disease Surveillance Officer at the Public Health Unit on 02 4824 1837.

Yours sincerely



KATHY DENNISS
Infectious Disease Surveillance Officer