



Pertussis Toolkit for Schools

Cerro Gordo County experienced a significant pertussis outbreak in 2012. To lessen the effects of future outbreaks, several community partners worked together to improve our area's current processes and develop helpful tools for your school to utilize during the event of another pertussis outbreak.

Enclosed you will find the following documents for your use and information:

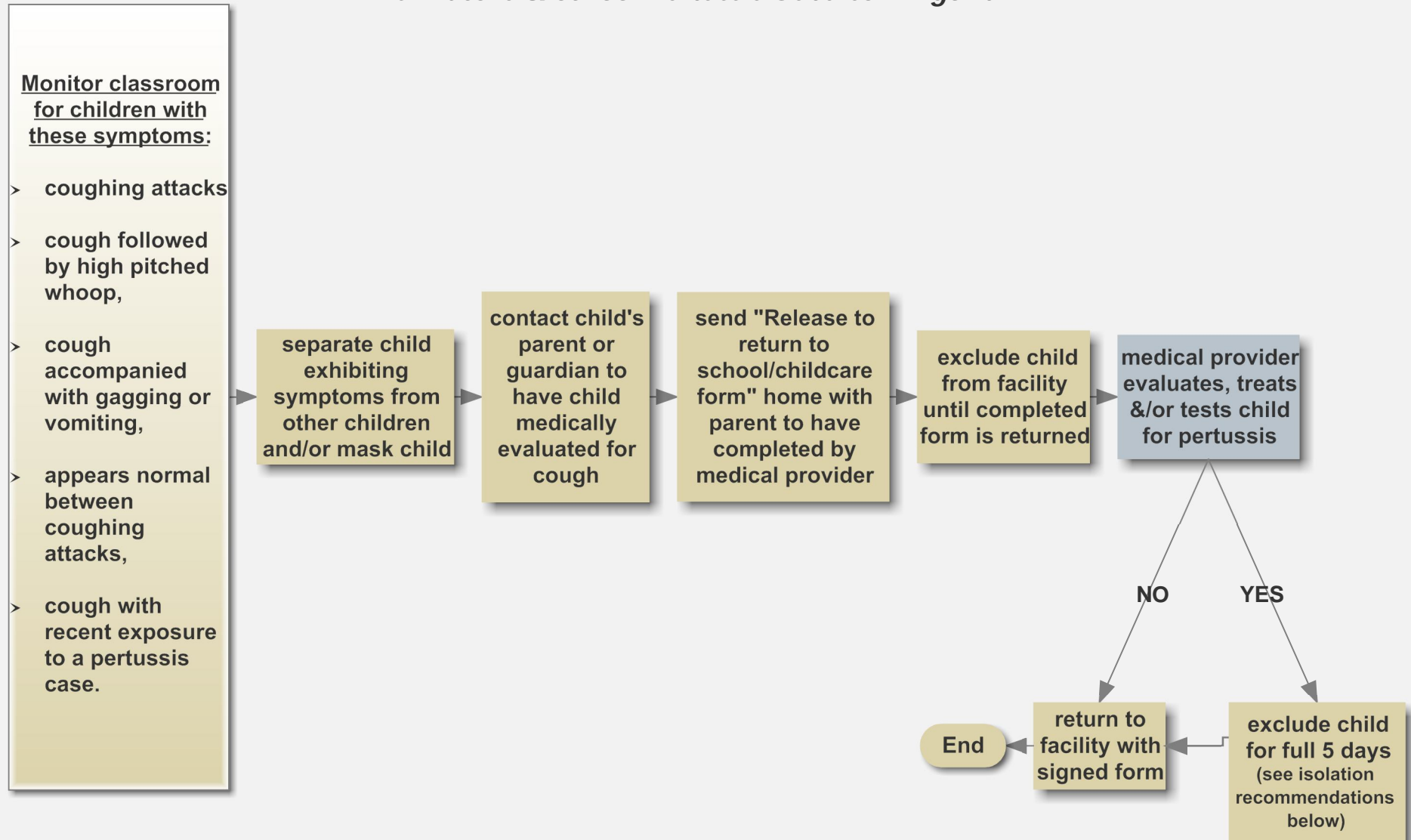
- Childcare and School Pertussis Outbreak Algorithm
 - The algorithm should be used as a guide once a case has been identified. The school nurse is encouraged to share the algorithm with the teacher once a case has been identified in their classroom.
- Pertussis Fact Sheet
 - The fact sheet should be used as an information resource once a case has been identified. The school nurse is encouraged to share the fact sheet with the teacher once a case has been identified in their classroom.
- General Pertussis Letter
 - This is a copy of a letter that can be distributed to students once a case is identified in the school. Public Health will assist the school nurse to determine whether to distribute the letter to students in a certain classroom, a certain grade level, an affected hallway, or all grades within the school building.
- Close Contact Pertussis Packet (includes a parent letter, fact sheet, and release form)
 - This is a copy of a letter that will be distributed (in consultation with Public Health) to close contacts of a pertussis case. School nurses are encouraged to require the *Release to Return to School Form* to be signed by a medical provider before allowing a coughing student to return to the school.

In addition, you may want to consider doing the following activities now:

- Identify a room, separate from others, for a student exhibiting pertussis symptoms to wait in until a parent can pick them up from school.
- If there is not a separate room to have the student wait, keep facemasks on hand for the student to use until the parent can pick them up from school.
- Establish an easy to identify, public handwashing station.
- Review your school's current health policies to ensure they support deviation from day-to-day illness identification and exclusion guidelines during a pertussis outbreak.

Please feel free to contact the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health if you have any questions or need assistance @ 641-421-9323. You may access a copy of this toolkit at www.cghealth.com under the Disease A-Z section: Pertussis - School Pertussis Toolkit.

Childcare & School Pertussis Outbreak Algorithm



Isolation Recommendations

A child tested or prescribed medication for pertussis shall not attend school or childcare until five (5) days of antibiotics are completed (e.g. child began antibiotics on Friday, may return on Wednesday).

What is pertussis (whooping cough)?

Pertussis is a disease caused by bacteria. It causes severe spells of coughing. These spells can interfere with eating, drinking and breathing. Pertussis can lead to pneumonia, convulsions, inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) and sometimes death.

Who can get pertussis?

Pertussis can occur at any age. It is most common in infants less than one year old, but anyone can get it. Pertussis can be hard to diagnose in teens and adults because their symptoms often look like a cold with a nagging cough.

How is pertussis spread?

Pertussis is spread through the air after an infected person coughs or sneezes. Other people breathe in infected droplets.

What are the symptoms of pertussis?

Pertussis starts like a cold with symptoms of runny nose and an irritating cough. Within one to two weeks the cough develops into coughing fits. The fits are a series of violent coughs during which the victim struggles for breath. A gasping for air, which produces a high-pitched whooping sound, follows the coughing. The coughing fits occur more frequently at night, and are often followed by vomiting. Between spells, the person usually appears to be well. Adults, teens, and vaccinated children may have milder symptoms.

How long is an infected person able to spread pertussis?

Without treatment an infected person can spread the disease from the time he or she starts coughing until 21 days after the start of the cough. After five days of treatment with an appropriate antibiotic, an infected person cannot spread the disease.

Can a person get pertussis again?

Yes.

How is pertussis diagnosed?

A doctor may think a patient has pertussis because of the symptoms, but a sample of mucus must be taken from the back of the nose for testing. This sample is then sent for testing to determine whether the patient has pertussis.

What is the treatment for pertussis?

Treatment with an appropriate antibiotic may help if given early in the illness. Other treatments such as fluids, oxygen, and mild sedation may help the child during the prolonged period of severe coughing.

Should people who have been around a person with pertussis be treated?

All household and other close contacts of persons with pertussis, regardless of age, should receive an antibiotic to prevent them from becoming ill and spreading whooping cough disease to others. Vaccination status should be assessed.

How can pertussis be prevented?

Pertussis may be prevented through routine immunization. Pertussis is spread through the air after an infected person coughs or sneezes. Other people breathe in infected droplets. Cover your mouth when you cough, stay away from others when they are coughing, wash your hands frequently. Ask your health care clinician/local public health department about vaccine for adolescents/adults.

Where is pertussis vaccine available?

All county health departments in Iowa give this vaccine. You may also check with your private health care provider.

Where can you get more information?

- Your doctor or nurse, your local health department (listed in the telephone book under local government).
- Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Disease Prevention and Immunization, (800) 831-6293.



*Cerro Gordo County
Department of Public Health*

November XX, 20XX

Dear Parent/Guardian:

There is a case of pertussis (whooping cough) at your child's school. The Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health is asking you to assess your child for a cough. **Please have your child seen by their doctor if coughing is present.**

Symptoms of pertussis include:

- Long lasting cough and/or uncontrolled coughing spells.
- Vomiting or turning blue in the face during severe coughing spells.
- Person often does not appear sick between coughing spells.

Please review the attached Pertussis Fact Sheet for more information. If you wish further information, call the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health at 641-421-9323 or visit the website at www.cghealth.com.

Sincerely,

Karen Crimmings, RN, CIC

Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health

FACT SHEET PERTUSSIS (Whooping Cough)

What is pertussis (whooping cough)?

Pertussis is a disease caused by bacteria. It causes severe spells of coughing. These spells can interfere with eating, drinking and breathing. Pertussis can lead to pneumonia, convulsions, inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) and sometimes death.

Who can get pertussis?

Pertussis can occur at any age. It is most common in infants less than one year old, but anyone can get it. Pertussis can be hard to diagnose in teens and adults because their symptoms often look like a cold with a nagging cough.

How is pertussis spread?

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How long is an infected person able to spread pertussis?

Without treatment an infected person can spread the disease from the time he or she starts coughing until 21 days after the start of the cough. After five days of treatment with an appropriate antibiotic, an infected person cannot spread the disease.

Can a person get pertussis again? Yes.

How is pertussis diagnosed?

A doctor may think a patient has pertussis because of the symptoms, but a sample of mucus must be taken from the back of the nose for testing. This sample is then sent for testing to determine whether the patient has pertussis.

What is the treatment for pertussis?

Treatment with an appropriate antibiotic may help if given early in the illness. Other treatments such as fluids, oxygen, and mild sedation may help the child during the prolonged period of severe coughing.

Should people who have been around a person with pertussis be treated?

All household and other close contacts of persons with pertussis, regardless of age, should receive an antibiotic to prevent them from becoming ill and spreading whooping cough disease to others. Vaccination status should be assessed.

How can pertussis be prevented?

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*Cerro Gordo County
Department of Public Health*

May XX, 20XX

Dear Parent/Guardian:

There is a person with pertussis (whooping cough) in your child's school. **Your child has had close contact with this person and needs to see their medical provider.**

Symptoms of pertussis include:

- Long lasting cough and/or uncontrolled coughing spells.
- Vomiting or turning blue in the face during severe coughing spells.
- Person often does not appear sick between coughing spells.

The following recommendations will help prevent further spread of pertussis within your household and/or your child's school:

- Your child will need medicine even if they are not coughing to prevent them from getting sick. Your child should also receive a pertussis vaccine if they are in need of one.
- If your child is coughing, have him/her seen immediately by their doctor. Please let the clinic know your child is coughing and has been exposed to pertussis when you make the appointment.
 - If your child is tested for pertussis they need to stay home and not have visitors until they have finished five full days of antibiotics. All public activities (school, childcare, sports, musical events, religious activities, shopping, etc.) should be avoided.

Please take this letter and the *Release to Return to School/Childcare* form with you to your child's doctor appointment so that your child can begin medicine as soon as possible. A Pertussis Fact Sheet is also included for further information.

A staff member from the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health will be in contact with you in the next 24-48 hours. In the meantime, if you have questions please call the Health Department at 641-421-9323.

Sincerely,
Karen Crimmings, RN, CIC
Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health



Release to Return to School/Childcare

Child's Name: _____

I have examined said child and he/she is free from communicable diseases and may return to school and/or childcare without exclusions.

I have examined said child and he/she may not return to school and/or childcare until _____.

(Please note a child tested or prescribed medication for pertussis shall not attend school or childcare until five (5) full days of antibiotics are completed (i.e. child began antibiotics on Friday may return on Wednesday).

Medical Provider's Signature: _____

Date: _____

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