

Dear Colleague:

Your patient may have been exposed to pertussis.

**For Exposed Patients without Symptoms:**

As a precaution to protect vulnerable individuals, we are recommending antibiotic prophylaxis for this patient if he or she shares a household with a woman who is pregnant or an infant less than 12 months old. Alternatively, this patient is being referred to you because he or she has an immunodeficiency or lives with a person with an immunodeficiency and may require antibiotic prophylaxis to help prevent pertussis.

**For Exposed Patients with Symptoms:**

As Henderson County Health Department continues to work with the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), we have developed the following guidelines for assessing and treating patients at this time:

**For patients coughing <21 days:**

1. Collect nasopharyngeal swabs or aspirate for pertussis PCR testing and/or culture.
2. Do not delay treatment with appropriate antibiotics while waiting for laboratory results if there is if no alternative diagnosis.
3. Document and communicate all clinical decisions related to pertussis to the school (this includes children for whom pertussis has been ruled out).
4. Strongly consider antibiotic prophylaxis for all household members if a pregnant woman, an infant less than 12 months old, or anyone with a weakened immune system lives in the household.

**For patients coughing ≥21 days:**

1. Testing for pertussis is not recommended. Testing after 3 weeks of cough is of limited benefit since PCR and culture are only sensitive during the first 2-3 weeks of cough when bacterial DNA is still present in the nasopharynx.
2. Treatment is no longer necessary after 21 days, with the following exception: infants and pregnant women in their third trimester should be treated up through 6 weeks after cough onset.
3. The patient is no longer infectious 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.

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 Henderson County Health Department, 309-627-2812..

Sincerely,

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