



*Office of the Deputy Medical Health Officer*  
Population and Public Health  
101 – 310 Idylwyld Drive North  
Saskatoon SK S7L 0Z2  
Phone: 306-655-4612 Fax: 306-655-4723

June 3, 2024

To: Grace Mennonite Church Members  
50 Pembroke Rd  
Neuanlage, SK S0K 1X1

**There has been a case of whooping cough (Pertussis) identified in your church.** Please read the attached Pertussis information sheet. It contains information that you can use to stop the spread of the disease and protect your child.

If you are **experiencing**, or **develop**, any of the symptoms of whooping cough, go to a physician for assessment, testing and any appropriate treatment. Early detection is important. **Bring this letter with you** and tell the doctor that you have been exposed to whooping cough. Note that adults, teens and children partially protected by vaccine may have milder disease than infants and young children. A whoop is not common in this group.

Pertussis is of particular concern for vulnerable people, which includes:

- Children under one year of age and
- Pregnant women in the last three months of pregnancy who could pass pertussis to their newborn.

If you are experiencing symptoms, yet feel well, you may continue to attend activities provided there are no vulnerable people (as described above) in attendance. If vulnerable people are present you can return to activities after completing five (5) days of an appropriate antibiotic.

Pertussis is a vaccine-preventable disease. You may have been immunized in childhood but your protection may have waned over the years. Adults are eligible for pertussis containing vaccine (Tdap), if they are:

- Due for their 10 year tetanus booster.
- Every pregnant woman during each pregnancy should be given a booster dose between 27-32 weeks to help protect baby at birth until they can start immunizations at 2 months of age
- Partners of those who are pregnant should also get a dose if they haven't yet received a booster dose as an adult

To book an immunization appointment, call 306-655-4780 to reach the Specialized Immunization and Travel Clinic.

### *Healthy People, Healthy Saskatchewan*

The Saskatchewan Health Authority works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Saskatchewan as the traditional territory of First Nations and Métis People.

**NOTICE OF CONFIDENTIALITY:** This information is for the recipient(s) listed and is considered confidential by law. If you are not the intended recipient, any use, disclosure, copying or communication of the contents is strictly prohibited.

Contact Population and Public Health in you need more information Monday to Friday 8:00 am - 4:30 pm at 306-655-4612.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jasmine Hasselback', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Jasmine Hasselback MD, MPH, FRCPC  
Area Lead – Public Health and Preventive Medicine  
Medical Health Officer – Saskatoon

# Pertussis “Whooping Cough” Disease

Keep your child and yourself safe. By getting all vaccines on time, you and your child can be protected from many vaccine preventable diseases over your lifetimes. Immunizations have saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other health measure.

## What is pertussis?

- Pertussis, or “whooping cough”, is a serious and highly contagious infection of the lungs and throat caused by *Bordetella pertussis* bacteria.
- Young children who have not been immunized get sicker than older children and adults.
- On average, one to three deaths occur due to pertussis in Canada. **Saskatchewan had three deaths from pertussis between 2010 – 2015.**
- People can get pertussis at any age. People can get pertussis many times during their life, as they do not develop permanent immunity. Disease may occur in those who have been vaccinated but symptoms are typically milder.

Serious complications of pertussis happen most often in infants and may include:

- Apnea (breathing stops)
- Pneumonia
- Convulsions or seizures
- Encephalopathy (brain damage) that may be permanent.

## What are the symptoms?

- Pertussis starts like a common cold with symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose, mild fever and a mild cough.
- During the next week or two, the cough gets worse, leading to severe coughing spells that often end with a whooping sound before the next breath, especially in young children.
- Teenagers and adults may not make the whooping sound.
- The cough can last one to two months and occurs more often at night. The cough can make a person gag or spit out mucus, and make it hard to take a breath. This prevents enough oxygen from getting to the brain.

## How is pertussis spread?

- **Early diagnosis and treatment is important to stop the spread of the pertussis bacteria.**
- A person with pertussis who does not get treatment can spread the germ to others for up to three weeks after the cough starts.
- Pertussis spreads easily when an infected person coughs, sneezes or has close contact with others.
- By sharing food, drinks or cigarettes, or kissing someone who carries the bacteria can also put you at risk.

## Is there a treatment?

Pertussis is treated with antibiotics, which help to reduce the spread of infection and the duration of illness when given during the very early stage of the illness.

People at high risk of serious illness who have been in close contact with someone with pertussis are given an antibiotic to prevent the disease. This includes infants younger than one year old and pregnant women in their last three months of pregnancy, as well as all of their household and daycare contacts.

People who have pertussis or who may have been exposed to pertussis **should not** have any contact with babies or young children until they have been properly tested and/or treated for pertussis. **If you have been in contact with a person who has pertussis, you should call your doctor, nurse practitioner or local health office for more information.**

## Pertussis containing vaccines

Pertussis containing vaccines are part of the routine childhood immunization program (2 months of age to Grade 8). An adult immunization program is now available as well.

Ask your public health nurse, nurse practitioner or doctor for more information about this vaccine.