

Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

The incidence of reported whooping cough has increased over the past few years. Although we have had no reported cases at South Seneca this year, there are cases in Tompkins County, including the Trumansburg school and TST BOCES. This is a contagious disease, and one we should be aware of.

Signs and symptoms:

Once you become infected with the bacterium that causes whooping cough, it takes a few days to weeks for signs and symptoms to appear. When they do, they are usually mild at first and resemble those of a common cold, such as:

- **A runny nose**
- **Nasal congestion**
- **Sneezing**
- **Red, watery eyes**
- **A mild fever**
- **Dry cough**
- **General feeling of being unwell and loss of appetite**

After a week or 2, signs and symptoms become worse and usually include:

- **Severe coughing attacks that bring up thick phlegm**
- **Coughing attacks that make it difficult to breathe, eat or drink, and are often characterized by an inspiratory “whoop” sound. Your child may actually vomit or turn red or blue due to the severity of the coughing fit, and may be fatigued from coughing so much. Coughing may be worse at night.**
- **In adults, the signs and symptoms may resemble bronchitis**

If you suspect your child has Pertussis, take him or her to the doctor for testing and treatment! The child should be isolated for 5days- they cannot come to school. Do not wait for test results before isolating the child!

Children are vaccinated for Pertussis at 2, 4, 6, between 15-18 months and between 4-6 years of age, with the DTap vaccine. The Seneca County Health Department strongly

recommends that children 11 years of age and older receive the Tdap vaccine to prevent Whooping Cough. We ask that you contact your child's physician regarding receiving this immunization if he/she is at least 11 years old, and they have not already received it.

If your child is diagnosed with Whooping Cough, he/she should not return to school until the doctor gives the ok. In general, children should stay out of school while they are taking antibiotics for pertussis. While the child is out of school, we recommend:

- **Get plenty of rest**
- **Drink plenty of fluids- juice, water and soup are good choices**
- **Eat smaller, more frequent , meals instead of large ones to avoid vomiting**
- **Vaporize the room to help soothe irritated lungs and loosen respiratory secretions**
- **Clean the air in your home by keeping it free from irritants that can trigger coughing spells, such as tobacco smoke and fumes from fireplaces and woodstoves**
- **Cover your cough, and wash your hands frequently to help stop the spread of the infection!**

Please feel free to contact your school nurse if you have questions.