Dear Parents/Guardians:

This letter is to inform you that there have been some students in our district that have tested positive for Pertussis (Whooping Cough). Our local Skagit County Health Department reports a spike in the numbers of people with whooping cough this year compared to this time last year.

Please read this information so that you are informed and contact your child’s doctor if they have a cough illness, especially a cough lasting more than 2 weeks that is so severe they vomit or have a hard time catching their breath.

Pertussis is a highly contagious, bacterial respiratory infection that begins with cold-type symptoms of coughing, sneezing, runny nose, and occasional vomiting. Then, in about 1-3 weeks the disease progresses to coughing spasms sometimes with vomiting at the end of the cough. Students that were immunized when younger may have fewer symptoms, but are still contagious. Because immunity diminishes over 10 years since the last vaccine in childhood the disease can vary from quite mild to a prolonged (several months) bout of uncomfortable, exhausting coughing episodes. Infection among adults is generally milder and is often mistaken for bronchitis.

Because average incubation is 9-10 days and possibly as long as 20 days after exposure if you or your child develop cold symptoms with a cough, please see a physician explaining the possible exposure to pertussis so that it can be ruled out. If they test for pertussis and treat your child with antibiotics they must stay home and not attend school for the full 5 days of treatment. This is to prevent the spread in the school and community. If the test results come back negative before the end of treatment, then they can return to school with the doctor’s approval.

Please remind your family to use good hand washing, cover coughs with tissue and throw them away or cough into sleeves. It is also important not to share food or drink.

The Centers for Disease Control now requires 1 dose to Tdap for students age 11 and if it has been at least 5 years since the last Dtap, DT or Td vaccines. They are also recommending for teens if it has been 5 years since their last tetanus (Td) that they have the Tdap to protect them from pertussis. They also recommend that all adults receive the Tdap booster. Please contact your child’s provider or the Skagit County Health Department at 360.336.9380 with any questions.

Thank you,

Maggie Woodard, RN
School District Nurse
360-466-3172