

September 1, 2015

All School Superintendants Edmonton Zone:

RE: Pertussis Outbreak in North Alberta

Alberta Health Service (AHS) declared an outbreak of Pertussis (Whooping Cough) - a highly contagious respiratory disease in the northern portion of the province that is expected to continue for months. Your schools in the City of Edmonton and surrounding area may have students and staff returning from the outbreak area after the summer break.

Attached is a letter for distribution to parents and guardians of your students with recommended actions to prevent Whooping Cough disease and transmission. Please distribute as you deem necessary.

Thank you for your co-operation and attention to this issue. If you have further questions, please contact the Medical Officer of Health Edmonton Zone at **780-433-3940**.

Sincerely,



Marcia M Johnson MD, MHSc, FRCP(C)
Medical Officer of Health Edmonton Zone

Encl: 1

September 1, 2015

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Re: Notice of Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Illness

There is an outbreak of pertussis (whooping cough) in the northern portion of the province due to an increased number of cases and associated hospitalizations. While the rate of pertussis illness in the City of Edmonton and surrounding area is not as high at the current time, pertussis (whooping cough) continues to circulate and cause illness in our communities with 101 cases diagnosed in 2014 and 54 cases to date in 2015. Pertussis is a contagious disease that typically is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes near another individual.

The pertussis vaccine, which protects against the illness, is part of the routine childhood immunization series in Alberta. Most children get the vaccine as part of their regular immunizations at 2/4/6/18 months, plus preschool and grade 9 doses. It is unusual but still possible for an individual that has received the pertussis vaccine to develop pertussis.

Please observe your child for the following symptoms:

1. Persistent cough
2. Spasms of coughing which are followed by a characteristic "whoop" sound, which may increase in frequency at night.
3. Coughing followed by gagging or vomiting.

If your child exhibits any of these symptoms, please have them assessed by your Family Doctor as soon as possible. More information regarding Pertussis can be found at:

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=hw65653> or contact Health Link at **811**.

As children return to classrooms and playgrounds this fall it is a great time to ensure all of their and their family members' immunizations are up-to-date not only for pertussis but also for other vaccine preventable illnesses such as measles, mumps, chickenpox and influenza.

Immunization is the best protection from many contagious bacteria and viruses for individual children and their parents and grandparents.