



## The City of York, Pennsylvania

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C. Kim Bracey, Mayor

**York City Bureau of Health  
Albert S. Weyer Health Center**

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### **PERTUSSIS ALERT**

Hello York City Child Care Provider:

The month of August 2010 has seen an unprecedented number of reported Pertussis (Whooping Cough) cases in York City residents, particularly children. Some children, especially the very young ones, have been very sick. Several have had to be hospitalized. Fortunately, none have died, but Pertussis is an evil villain very capable of killing a young infant. Elsewhere in York County there have been additional reports of Pertussis cases. The total count of confirmed Pertussis cases this year in York City and York County is rapidly approaching 20, with about half of them in the City alone.

This outbreak is similar to outbreaks occurring in other areas of Pennsylvania and in other states across the nation. The State of California has been particularly very hard hit with a large number of cases (several thousand) and infant deaths (nearly 10).

Pertussis is a bacterial infection that causes respiratory illness spread from person to person by respiratory droplets from sneezing or coughing. It begins with mild symptoms similar to an ordinary cold – runny nose, nasal congestion, and slight cough. It then progresses into severe and long coughing spells that can end with a classic inspiratory “whoop” and/or post-tussive (after coughing) vomiting. Fever is usually not a big factor in Pertussis.

In order to make your child care facility safe from Pertussis, here are some things you can do.

1. Check all of your children’s immunization records to be sure each is up-to-date with their Pertussis-containing vaccines (DTaP or DPT) – first three at 2, 4, and 6 months of age, #4 (1<sup>st</sup> booster) at 18 months of age, and #5 (2<sup>nd</sup> booster) at 4-6 years of age. If you are unsure what to do or what to look for, contact Terri Fitzgerald, R.N., our Health Bureau’s Child Care Consultant, for further assistance.
2. Adult staff should also have current Pertussis-containing vaccine protection. Since the Pertussis-containing vaccine for adults is fairly new (licensed in 2006 but not widely used until the last year or two), most adults will need to get this additional protection. The vaccine is called “Tdap” which stands for Tetanus, Diphtheria, and acellular Pertussis. Adults should contact their personal primary care physician to get this immunization. Terri Fitzgerald, R.N., can also be helpful in advising you about other options for your staff to receive this vaccine. A single “booster” dose of Tdap is recommended for adults from 18-64 years of age.



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3. Sick children with bad coughs should be excluded. Of course, it would also make sense to exclude children with early Pertussis symptoms, but since those symptoms are much like an ordinary cold, that would not be practical, particularly as we head into the fall and winter seasons. Also, ordinary colds are usually not due to Pertussis bacteria but instead a variety of respiratory infection viruses. Confirmed Pertussis cases may return to child care after they have completed 5 days of appropriate antibiotic therapy.
4. Compulsively practice good “Respiratory Etiquette” throughout your facility – cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw the tissue away. Have boxes of tissues widely available in various locations within your center. Perhaps ask each parent to contribute a new box of tissues to your center (saves you money) and maybe they will be more likely to purchase a supply of tissues for their home too.
5. Wash hands often with soap and hot water, especially after coughing or sneezing or handling used tissues. The use of hand sanitizer, beneficial when soap and running water is not readily available, should be carefully considered since you do not want small children getting a hold of it and ingesting it since it usually contains alcohol.
6. Clean contact surfaces and toys frequently with germicidal cleansers.
7. Avoid close contact with persons who are sick. Coughing children who are waiting to be picked up should be isolated from the other children until the parent arrives. Better yet – children who are sick should stay home in the first place until better.
8. Since illness due to Pertussis can last up to several weeks, parents should be strongly advised to have their ill child evaluated by their primary care physician. There are tests that might be done and, if indicated, antibiotics that are safe and effective can be prescribed.
9. Important Contacts
  - Terri Fitzgerald, R.N., Child Care Consultant, York City Bureau of Health, call 849-2296 (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.).
  - Websites:
    - [www.yorkcity.org](http://www.yorkcity.org) (Pertussis tab on right hand side)
    - [www.cdc.gov/pertussis](http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis)
    - [www.whoopingcough.net](http://www.whoopingcough.net) (check out the sounds and videos of children with Whooping Cough)
    - [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)
  - Immunization Clinics for York City residents – Call the York City Bureau of Health at 849-2299 or 815-0910 for clinic times and to make an appointment.
  - Immunization Clinics for non-York City residents – Call the York County State Health Center at 771-4505 for clinic times and to make an appointment.

We at the York City Bureau of Health appreciate your interest and concern for the health and safety of all the children at your center. If we can be of any further help, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are eager to assist you any way we can.

Sincerely yours,

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