

Park Ridge Public Schools

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2 Park Avenue
Park Ridge, N.J. 07656

Dr. Patricia Johnson
Superintendent of Schools

December 2, 2009

Dear Park Ridge Parents and Guardians,

For a number of years, many thought that whooping cough/pertussis was a disease of the past. Although still not common, we have had three cases identified in the Park Ridge Schools in the past two weeks. All three persons have had close contact with each other, but they also have been in contact with others in the schools and the community.

Whooping cough/pertussis is a highly contagious disease that is spread through the air by a cough or a sneeze. While often thought of as a "child's disease," people of all ages are susceptible to the disease. Within the last few years, medical researchers have discovered that after a certain period of time immunity from the disease fails in some individuals, even when they had received the complete DPT immunization. Until recently, only children under seven years old have been given the vaccine; however, a new pertussis booster vaccine is now available for persons between 10 and 64 years old. The Bergen County Department of Health Services recommends that you speak to your physician about the benefits of vaccination.

Whooping cough/pertussis begins with cold symptoms and a cough, which become much worse over one or two weeks. Symptoms usually include a long series of coughing fits followed by a whooping noise. However, older children, adults and very young infants may not develop the "whoop." There is generally only a slight fever. People with whooping cough/pertussis may have a series of severe coughing fits followed immediately by vomiting, turning blue, or difficulty catching breath. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help alleviate the cough. There is a test which can confirm whether or not a person has whooping cough/pertussis.

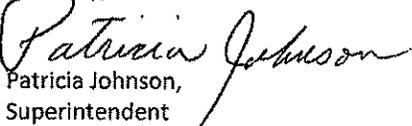
The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services have issued the following recommendations:

1. Infants under one year old, especially those under six months, are most likely to have severe symptoms if they develop whooping cough/pertussis. When possible, young infants should be kept away from people with a cough. **Infants with any coughing illness should be seen promptly by their doctor.**
2. If a member of your family comes down with cold symptoms that include a cough, talk to your doctor immediately. Tell the doctor that whooping cough/pertussis has been identified in the community in which you live and in groups in which your children play.
3. It is generally recommended that those persons having close contact with a whooping cough/pertussis case receive antibiotics from their doctor to help prevent them from getting whooping cough/pertussis. If someone is already sick, a regimen of antibiotics early can help him/her to get well faster, and it lessens the chance of spreading the disease to others.
4. When someone has signs or symptoms of whooping cough/pertussis, it is imperative they he/she restrict contact with others by staying at home from school and/or work and not going to public places.

We continue to monitor the situation at school and if additional actions to control the spread of whooping cough/pertussis among pupils becomes necessary, we will again notify parents.

If you have concerns or questions about whooping cough/pertussis or the vaccinations, contact your physician or the Bergen County Department of Health Services at 201.634.2657 or 201.634.2655.

Sincerely,


Patricia Johnson,
Superintendent

A district "committed to educational excellence"

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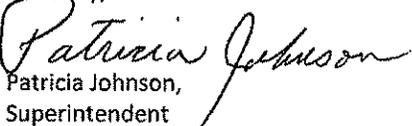
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