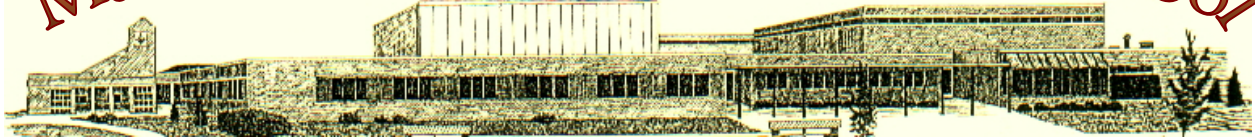


# Madrid-Waddington Central School



*Lynn M. Roy, Superintendent*

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Tel. 315 322-5746  
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November 26, 2007

Dear Parent/Guardian:

New York State Public Health has informed us that a student in our district has recently been diagnosed with pertussis (whooping cough), a highly contagious disease involving the respiratory tract. While this is a serious matter needing your full attention, it is our intent to provide factual information in order to alleviate any undue anxiety.

Pertussis begins with cold symptoms and a cough which becomes much worse over 1-2 weeks. Symptoms usually include a long series of coughs ("coughing fits") followed by a whooping noise. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines do not help alleviate the cough.

We have attached an informational sheet from the Public Health Department regarding pertussis. Please read this document carefully. If your child has been around someone with pertussis, he/she may become sick with pertussis as well. This is especially true if the child has not received all the pertussis vaccine shots. Sometimes even if an individual's immunizations are up to date, they are still able to contract this disease to a lesser degree. Antibiotics are a proven, effective form of treatment should your child come into contact with someone with pertussis or has already contracted the illness.

It is highly recommended that you contact your own physician to answer any questions you may have and to ensure that all immunizations are up-to-date. The website, [www.pertussis.com](http://www.pertussis.com), may also be accessed for additional information.

The following names and numbers are provided to you as further resources:

Mrs. Penny Francis, R.N., School Nurse 322-5746, ext. 203  
Becky Trejos, St. Lawrence County Public Health 386-2325  
Dr. John Burnett, School Physician 764-0501

I, too, am available to answer any questions. Please do not hesitate to contact me should the need arise.

Sincerely,

*Lynn M. Roy*

Lynn M. Roy

Enc.

# New York State Department of Health

## Pertussis (whooping cough)

Last Reviewed: November 2006

### What is pertussis?

Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a highly contagious disease involving the respiratory tract. It is caused by a bacterium that is found in the mouth, nose and throat of an infected person. In New York State, the number of pertussis cases each year varies from an average of 300 cases to over 1,000 cases per year. The reasons for these increases are not entirely clear, but three- to five-year cycles of increased number of cases are known to occur.

### Who gets pertussis?

Pertussis can occur at any age. Although most of the reported cases occur in children under five years, the number of cases in adolescents and adults is increasing.

### How is pertussis spread?

Pertussis is primarily spread by direct contact with discharges from the nose and throat of infected individuals. Frequently, older siblings who may be harboring the bacteria in their nose and throat can bring the disease home and infect an infant in the household.

### What are the symptoms of pertussis?

Pertussis begins as a mild upper respiratory infection. Initially, symptoms resemble those of a common cold, including sneezing, runny nose, low-grade fever and a mild cough. Within two weeks, the cough becomes more severe and is characterized by episodes of numerous rapid coughs followed by a crowing or high pitched whoop. A thick, clear mucous may be discharged. These episodes may recur for one to two months, and are more frequent at night. Older people or partially immunized children generally have milder symptoms.

### How soon after infection do symptoms appear?

The incubation period is usually five to 10 days but may be as long as 21 days.

### When and for how long is a person able to spread pertussis?

A person can transmit pertussis from onset of symptoms to three weeks after the onset of coughing episodes.

The period of communicability is reduced to five days after antibiotic therapy is begun.

### Does past infection with pertussis make a person immune?

One attack usually confers prolonged immunity.

### What are the complications associated with pertussis?

Complications of pertussis may include pneumonia, middle ear infection, loss of appetite, dehydration, seizures, encephalopathy (disorders of the brain), apneic episodes (brief cessation of breathing) and death.

### What is the vaccine for pertussis?

The vaccine for pertussis is usually given in combination with diphtheria and tetanus. Immunization authorities recommend that DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis) vaccine be given at two, four, six and 15-18 months of age and between four and six years of age.

### What can be done to prevent the spread of pertussis?

The single most effective control measure is maintaining the highest possible level of immunization in the community. Treatment of cases with certain antibiotics such as erythromycin can shorten the contagious

period. People who have or may have pertussis should stay away from young children and infants until properly treated. Treatment of people who are close contacts of pertussis cases is also an important part of prevention.

Revised: September 2004

**Please consider the following New York State Department of Health recommendations:**

1. Infants under one year old, especially those under six months, are most likely to have severe symptoms if they develop 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 between age 6 weeks and 7 years of age with an incomplete DTaP immunization series, they should receive the DTaP doses at the recommended minimal intervals to bring them up to date for their age. DTaP vaccine may be given to infants as early as 6 weeks of age.**
3. **If between 10 years and 64 years, St. Lawrence County Health Department recommends immunization with one dose to Tdap, a pertussis containing vaccine. It is safe and acceptable to give Tdap if two or more years have elapsed since the last Td.**
4. **If your child comes down with cold symptoms that include a cough, talk to your child's doctor without delay. Tell the doctor that pertussis has been seen in your child's schoolmates.**

St. Lawrence County Public Health Dept.