

To our GISD community,

Williamson County and Cities Health District (WCCHD) and GISD work together to monitor illness in our community. Currently, Williamson County is experiencing an increasing number of pertussis cases, including cases in several schools in Georgetown ISD. Pertussis is a very contagious disease that is spread through the air by coughing. While pertussis is usually milder in older children and adults, it can cause very serious problems for very young children.

Pertussis symptoms appear **5 – 21** days after infection and may begin like a cold, with a runny nose, sneezing, mild fever, and cough. After one to two weeks, the cough gets worse and usually starts occurring in strong coughing fits. This type of coughing may last for six or more weeks. There is generally no fever during this time. In young children, coughing fits are often followed by a “whooping” sound as they try to catch their breath. After coughing, a person may vomit, have difficulty catching their breath, or become blue in the face. In babies, the coughing spells may be so bad that it is hard for them to eat, drink, or breathe. The cough of pertussis is often worse at night, and cough medicines provide relative little relief.

Please consider the following health recommendations:

1. If your child comes down with symptoms such as those listed above, that include coughing, talk to your child’s doctor without delay. Call your campus School Nurse regarding the illness. **All** possible pertussis infections should be reported to our local health department, WCCHD by your physician.
2. Infants under one year of age, and particularly those less than 6 months, are most likely to experience severe illness if they develop pertussis. As much as possible, young infants should be kept away from people with a cough. **Infants with any coughing illness should be promptly evaluated by their doctor.**
3. If you have children who have not been completely immunized against pertussis or if you have infants under one year old at home, please be especially alert for these symptoms and **talk to your child’s doctor about the benefits of vaccination.**
4. Persons with weakened immune systems or medical conditions such as cystic fibrosis are at high risk for acquiring severe disease following exposure to pertussis. If your child has underlying medical conditions such as these, discuss antibiotic therapy with your child’s physician as an additional preventive measure.
5. If your child has been prescribed antibiotics for **suspected or confirmed** pertussis, please **keep them home until 5 full days of antibiotics have been completed** as they may continue to be contagious.

Should you have questions contact your campus School Nurse – she can help you process the needs for your child and guide you towards appropriate care.

For more information about pertussis, visit <http://www.wcchd.org/Services/DiseaseMgmt/Pertussis.htm> or contact the Williamson County & Cities Health District at 512-943-3660

Georgetown ISD Health Services