

Southern School District #1

A Small-School Community, with Big Opportunities

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September 27, 2024

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Southern Public Schools has confirmed a few cases of pertussis, also known as whooping cough, this week in our school district. Pertussis is on the rise in the United States and in Nebraska. Nebraska's increase in cases is similar to those reported nationally.

Pertussis is an acute, contagious respiratory disease caused by *Bordetella pertussis* bacteria. Pertussis can be serious and sometimes deadly for babies and young children, especially those who haven't had all of their recommended pertussis vaccines. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "About 1 in 3 babies younger than 1 year old who get whooping cough need care in the hospital."

Early symptoms of pertussis may appear like a common cold, including runny and/or stuffy noses, low-grade fevers, and mild coughs. However, 1-2 weeks after symptom onset, people may experience coughing fits called paroxysms. Coughing fits may persist from 1-10 weeks and may cause the high-pitched "whoop" sound characteristic of pertussis. Some people may also experience vomiting, feel fatigued after coughing fits, struggle to breathe, and more severe symptoms.

The best way to prevent pertussis is with vaccination. CDC recommends pertussis vaccination for everyone. While infants are not eligible for pertussis vaccination until they are 2 months old, both CDC and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommend that all pregnant women receive a pertussis vaccine between 27 and 36 weeks of each pregnancy to help protect babies from serious illness until they are old enough to get vaccinated on their own.

Though it is best to prevent pertussis with vaccination, antibiotic treatment early in the course of infection may help. Some people who are seriously ill may need care in the hospital, but many people can manage their symptoms at home.

If you think you have been exposed to a pertussis case or have symptoms, please call your healthcare provider.

Sincerely,

Christopher Proski, Ed.D.
Superintendent