



That winter cough could be whooping cough!

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a bacterial illness that begins with cold-like symptoms & a mild cough progressing to a more severe cough lasting two weeks or more. Other signs of pertussis can be coughing to the point of vomiting, coughing fits, low-grade fever, and/or a whooping sound. Most cases just have one or two of these additional symptoms. Persons experiencing pertussis are contagious until they have completed five full days of an appropriate antibiotic or until they have coughed for three weeks.

Laboratories and/or physicians are required by statute to report anyone who tests positive for pertussis to their local public health agency such as Tri-County Health Department (TCHD), who serves Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties, in order for public health to investigate and determine exposure and associated follow-up. When TCHD determines there is an exposure in a school, they will contact the district nurse or school nurse to assess the risk. TCHD will then make recommendations for notifying families and determine the need for post exposure prophylaxis (to prevent the disease) for persons exposed to confirmed cases. Persons exposed should receive treatment even if they are fully immunized.

People can still get pertussis even when vaccinated. The efficacy of the vaccine is not as high as some other vaccines (approximately 85%) so some people are not fully protected against pertussis with vaccination. In addition there is waning immunity for students and staff the further away they are from their last dose of vaccine.

For more information:

<http://www.tchd.org/DocumentCenter/View/1623>

<https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/>