DHEC Letter for Persons Exposed to Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

Date: December 4, 2014

Dear Parent/Guardian,

A case of whooping cough has been identified in Anderson School District Five.

Anyone who attended or visited T.L. Hanna High School and had close contact with the case around these dates (on or after November 19, 2014) may have been exposed to whooping cough.

Whooping cough is a contagious disease that affects the nose, throat, windpipe, and lungs. It spreads easily by coughing or sneezing. People with whooping cough may have coughing fits. They might throw up after coughing. The severe cough can last for weeks or months. Babies may have spells when they stop breathing.

Whooping cough can be dangerous for babies and for people with lung diseases or weakened immune systems. Family members with whooping cough can spread it to babies.

Recommendations from DHEC:

1. If any of the following apply to the person who was exposed to whooping cough, contact your healthcare provider right away:
   - She is a woman who is pregnant, or
   - He or she is an infant younger than 12 months old, or
   - He or she has a weakened immune system, or
   - He or she has a severe lung disease, or
   - He or she lives with an infant under 12 months old, with a pregnant woman, or with someone with severe lung disease or a weakened immune system.

   Show this letter to your healthcare provider. Ask him or her about antibiotics to protect the exposed person from getting whooping cough.

2. If the exposed person has a cough now, or starts coughing in the next 3 weeks, the coughing person should:
   - Stay home from group activities such as work, school, sports or playgroups, church, etc. The coughing person may be contagious with whooping cough.
   - Make an appointment with a healthcare provider as soon as possible. Tell the provider about the cough and about the possible exposure to whooping cough.
   - Bring this letter with you to your appointment. (read more on the next page)
• **If your healthcare provider says that you have or your child has whooping cough:**
  o Stay home from work, school, childcare, until the person with whooping cough has been on antibiotics for 5 days.
  o The person with whooping cough should not go to other activities, such as sports or playgroups, shopping, concerts, etc. during that time.
  o The person with whooping cough should not have visitors during the first 5 days of antibiotics.
  o Ask your healthcare provider for a note that states you have or your child has whooping cough. Give this to the school, childcare, or employer.
  o Be sure that the person with whooping cough covers his/her mouth and nose when coughing. The coughing person should use tissues and throw them away carefully. Most important, the coughing person should wash his or her hands often.

• **If your healthcare provider says the coughing person does NOT have whooping cough:**
  o Ask for a note from the healthcare provider that the exposed person’s cough is NOT whooping cough.
  o The exposed person may return to work, school, childcare, and other activities.

If you have any questions, please contact the Upstate Region Public Health Epidemiology Office at 864-260-5801.

Sincerely,

Dr. Melissa Overman, Regional Medical Director

Upstate Public Health Region, SC DHEC