

Parents, Guardians and Students,

The Indiana State Department of Health and the Indiana Department of Education have asked that school systems provide important information to parents and guardians of students about **pertussis (whooping cough)** and the vaccines available to prevent this serious illness. Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*. Pertussis is spread by infectious airborne droplets created when a person who is infected coughs or sneezes. Infants and young children are typically vaccinated against pertussis, but the vaccine loses effectiveness as children get older and vaccinated children can become infected.

Pertussis causes severe coughing fits. During the fits, the affected person may be short of breath and appear distressed. The coughing fit may be followed by vomiting and exhaustion. Young infants are at highest risk for developing complications like pneumonia and seizures from the disease.

Adolescents and adults who have been previously vaccinated may have milder disease, but they can still spread pertussis to others. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a routine pertussis booster for all 11-12 year old children, and for anyone older who did not have a booster at 11-12 years of age. The pertussis booster (Tdap) is combined with tetanus toxoid and takes the place of one tetanus booster shot. The Tdap vaccine can be given as soon as one year after a regular tetanus booster.

Please talk with your child's healthcare provider about the **Tdap vaccine**. Additional resources for families to obtain information about pertussis disease include the websites below.

Indiana State Law IC 20-30-5-18 requires that school systems provide important information to parents and guardians of students about meningococcal disease and the vaccines available to prevent this serious illness at the beginning of each school year. **Meningococcal disease** is caused by the bacterium *Neisseria meningitidis* and generally affects children and young adults in two ways:

- meningitis (an inflammation of the tissues covering the brain and or spinal cord)
- bloodstream infection (that usually leads to bleeding under the skin)

Symptoms of meningococcal disease can include a sudden onset of fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, and confusion and in blood stream infections a rash will develop. This disease progresses rapidly and often results in permanent

hearing loss, mental retardation, limb amputations and even death. The bacteria spread through air droplets or by means of direct contact with an infected person's saliva.

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends routine vaccination with the meningococcal conjugate vaccine (Menactra) for all students 11-12 years of age, or 13 –18 years of age if not previously vaccinated. Children ages 2 -10, who have a disorder of the immune system or whose spleen has been removed should also receive the Menactra vaccine as they are at higher risk for contracting this disease. Many local health departments and private healthcare providers offer this vaccine. Please talk with your child's healthcare provider about meningococcal vaccine and immunization.

Additional resources for families to obtain information about meningococcal disease include the following websites:

The Indiana State Department of Health

<http://www.in.gov/isdh/22121.htm>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/mening/default.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pertussis/default.htm>

The Indiana Department of Education Student Services, School Health

<http://www.doe.in.gov/sservices/sn.htm>