**Pertussis (Whooping Cough)**

**Description**

Pertussis is a highly contagious, bacterial infection of the nose and throat. Pertussis begins with an upper-reparatory “catarrhal” stage that is characterized by coughing, sneezing, runny nose, and occasional vomiting. This stage can last up to 2 weeks. The disease then enters its paroxysmal stage where the coughing is staccato and comes in multiple, exhausting bursts. A cough episode may be followed by a sudden characteristic “whooping” sound as the child breathes in and sometimes by vomiting at the end of the episode. Sweating, exhaustion, gagging and excessive amounts of mucus secretions may accompany the cough. This stage lasts for 2-4 weeks followed by a recovery phase of gradually diminishing frequency of cough episodes over a period of 2-3 weeks. Children under the age of 1 years are much more liable to suffer serious consequences than older children. In young infants the disease can be fatal. In older children who were never immunized, incompletely immunized or whose immunity has wanted since the last vaccination, the disease can vary from quite mild to a prolonged (several months) bout of uncomfortable, exhausting coughing episodes. Infection among adults is common but is generally milder and is often mistaken for bronchitis.

**Clallam County Health and Human Services directs: Pregnant women and children under one year of age who may have been exposed are much more liable to suffer serious consequences and should contact their health care provider immediately**.

The OSPI directs us to:  **Inform students and staff with certain high-risk conditions: anemia, immunodeficiencies and pregnancy.**

**Mode of Transmission**

Transmission of pertussis is usually spread by droplets or direct contact with the respiratory secretions of an infected person.

**Infectious Period**

Pertussis is most infectious during the early catarrhal stage and at the beginning of the paroxysmal stage. Communicability gradually declines and is negligible by 3 weeks after the onset of paroxysms. Patients who are infected need to be isolated during the first 5 days of an appropriate antibiotic treatment, but may return to school when 5 days of antibiotic therapy has been completed, even though they may continue to cough for some time.

**Control of Spread**

Encourage proper handwashing techniques

Never share items that may be contaminated with saliva such as beverage containers

Clean or dispose of articles soiled with nose and throat discharges

Cover mouth with tissue when coughing or sneezing. If no tissue is available, encourage students to “catch your cold in your elbow” by covering their mouth and nose with the crook of their arm and coughing or sneezing into their shirt or coat sleeve.

Recommend immunization of students who are unimmunized or incompletely immunized.