



# CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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March 11, 2019

**TO: Parents and guardians of students in Long Beach**  
**FROM: Anissa Davis, M.D., M.P.H., Health Officer, City of Long Beach**  
**SUBJECT: Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Recommendations for Parents, 2019**

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has anticipated that 2019 will be a very active year for pertussis (also known as whooping cough). Currently, the number of cases reported in Long Beach in 2019 are already much higher than expected. The Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services (Health Department), is informing parents and guardians in Long Beach about pertussis and how to best protect your families and prevent the spread of the disease.

## **Symptoms & Treatment**

Pertussis is a bacterial infection that can spread through the air when people cough. It usually starts like a common cold and gets increasingly worse over 1-2 weeks as a cough develops. People with pertussis may have coughing spells in which they are unable to catch their breath between coughs. As they catch their breath at the end of a coughing spell, they may loudly gasp (“whoop”), vomit, or feel like they’re choking. Young babies with pertussis may not have a cough or fever, but may have trouble breathing and gag, gasp, turn blue, or vomit. Pertussis can be treated with antibiotics, which are most effective when given as early as possible during the course of the infection.

## **Vaccine**

The tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis vaccine (Tdap) can protect against pertussis, but can wane over time. Because of this, students entering 7th grade must show proof of a Tdap booster. In addition, pregnant women should receive Tdap vaccine during each pregnancy, at the earliest opportunity between 27-36 weeks to protect the baby against pertussis once baby is born. Babies under one year of age and especially those under six months of age, are most likely to get very sick if they develop pertussis. Babies should be kept away from people with a cough if at all possible, and if they show any signs of trouble breathing or a coughing, they should be checked by a doctor right away. Tdap vaccine is widely available at doctor’s offices, some pharmacies and local health departments and is generally covered by most insurance plans.

## **Transmission & Prevention**

Like many respiratory illnesses, pertussis is spread by coughing and sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the bacteria. Family members with pertussis, especially siblings and parents, can spread pertussis to babies. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends practicing good hygiene to prevent the spread of all respiratory illnesses. To practice good hygiene you

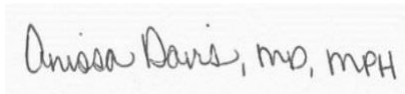
should encourage your children and family members to:

- Get vaccinated
- Keep your child home if he/she is ill
- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- Put used tissue in the waste basket
- Cough or sneeze into upper sleeve or elbow, not in their hands, if no tissue is available
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available

**Disease Control**

The Health Department's Epidemiology Program investigates each case of pertussis. If your child is diagnosed with pertussis, the Health Department will work with you and the school nurse to determine when it is safe for him/her to return to school. If you have any questions, please contact the LBDHHS Epidemiology Program at (562)570-4302, or email [LBepi@longbeach.gov](mailto:LBepi@longbeach.gov). You can also visit our website at [www.longbeach.gov/pertussis](http://www.longbeach.gov/pertussis) for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anissa Davis, MD, MPH". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light-colored rectangular background.

Anissa Davis, MD, MPH, Health Officer

City of Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services