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Feb. 5, 2019
3 p.m.

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LFCHD alerts parents to new pertussis case at Henry Clay High School

The Lexington-Fayette County Health Department is notifying parents at Henry Clay High School of a confirmed case of pertussis, or whooping cough. This is the fifth confirmed case in Lexington in 2019 and the second at HCHS.

Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory illness spread by coughing and sneezing. It affects people of all ages but can be most serious in infants and those with chronic diseases. The health department continues to work with Fayette County Public Schools to make parents aware of the threat of pertussis.

The health department is recommending preventive antibiotics for high-risk students who were exposed to pertussis. This includes students with a chronic illness or weakened immune system and those who live in households with the following: a family member with a chronic illness or weakened immune system, an infant or a pregnant woman.

Any school-age children with symptoms of pertussis should stay home from school and visit their health care provider for evaluation, even if they have previously been vaccinated. If found to have probable or confirmed pertussis, they should remain out of school until completion of their antibiotics. For more information about pertussis, call 859-288-2437.

The early symptoms are similar to a common cold: runny nose, sneezing, low-grade fever and coughing. After 1-2 weeks, the cough often gets worse, changing from a dry, hacking cough to bursts of uncontrollable, sometimes violent, coughing. During a coughing episode, it might be temporarily impossible to take a breath because of the intensity and repetition of the coughs. When finally able to breathe, the person might take a sudden gasp of air, which can cause a "whooping" sound. Vomiting and exhaustion can often follow a coughing spell.

The vaccine against pertussis is routine and required for school-age kids. One dose of the booster vaccine, called Tdap, is recommended for ages 11 and above for protection. Teenagers and adults who have never received the Tdap vaccine should check with their primary care provider or call the health department at 859-288-2483 to check availability. Although the vaccine is effective, immunity tends to decrease over time, making the booster important for older children and adults.

Be sure to like the Lexington-Fayette County Health Department on Facebook at www.facebook.com/LFCHD, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/LFCHD and Instagram at [@lexpublichealth](https://www.instagram.com/lexpublichealth).

Helping Lexington be well.