Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

Should there be a case of Whooping Cough in your child's classroom, your child may be exposed. If your child has not been vaccinated against it or not had Whooping Cough, then it is possible that he will get it.

What is Whooping Cough (Pertussis)?

Whooping Cough is a lung infection that can be very serious in young infants and in children with lung or heart problems or other chronic illness. The illness tends to be less severe when it develops in an older child or adult.

It usually begins as a mild chesty cold which develops into a severe cough. It is recognised by the whoop that follows coughing spasms. These spasms help to spread the germs around.

There are a number of possible complications including, pneumonia, seizures and even brain damage. The illness normally develops 7 to 10 days after exposure. The person will be contagious for up to three weeks after the symptoms develop.

What should I do now?

If you have any children in the house who have not received the full series of vaccines, contact your doctor or local health clinic to discuss vaccinations. Watch older children and adults for symptoms which usually develop about 1 week after exposure. Taking the antibiotic Erythomycin as soon as symptoms start can shorten the illness. This will also help stop the illness from spreading to other people.

What should I do if I think my child has Whooping Cough?

Arrange for your Doctor to see the child and confirm the diagnosis. Do not bring the child to the crowded surgery waiting room, as this will just spread the infection further.

Can my child stay in school?

Many children with Whooping Cough are too sick to attend school and are more comfortable at home. Children with Whooping Cough should stay at home until they have finished a five-day course of antibiotics and are well enough to attend school.

Your doctor and local health clinic will be able to answer any further questions that you might have about Whooping Cough and Whooping Cough vaccine.