

Healthy Knights Email
Monday, November 14, 2024
Title: Pertussis

To the Arcadia Campus Community:

The Montgomery County Office of Public Health (MCOPH) has identified a case of pertussis, also known as whooping cough, at Arcadia University. This information was reported to MCOPH on 11/14/2024. Student Health Services (SHS) is working in partnership with MCOPH to coordinate community care efforts.

Since the summer months, the PA Department of Health has been reporting an increase in pertussis (whooping cough) in the commonwealth, which is consistent with national reports.

Pertussis is a respiratory illness caused by a bacteria called *Bordetella pertussis*. Antibiotics are used to help treat the illness and to help prevent some exposed individuals from getting sick (prophylaxis). Antibiotics are effective for bacterial infections, not viral infections. It is an endemic (common) disease in the United States. Once considered primarily a childhood infection, there has been an increasing awareness of cases and hospitalizations affecting older adults, likely due to waning vaccine protection and lack of timely recognition and testing by adult providers.

Early symptoms of pertussis infection often look like a common cold: runny or stuffed up nose; low grade fever; and mild occasional cough. Later symptoms, however, can develop into paroxysms, or coughing fits. The characteristic "whoop" noise is caused by someone gasping for air after a coughing fit. Coughing fits can also produce fatigue and vomiting. Those who have pertussis can spread the disease for several weeks without proper treatment.

If you are experiencing symptoms such as a persistent cough or fever, we encourage you to visit Student Health Services or your Healthcare provider. Early treatment can help prevent the spread of infection and speed up recovery. Please keep in mind that treatment of asymptomatic contacts is generally reserved for:

- Close household contact. On campus, the definition of a "household contact" includes:
 - Those sharing a confined space in close proximity with a symptomatic case patient for greater than one hour;
 - Those who have had direct face-to-face contact for a period (not defined) with a symptomatic case while they were infectious; or
 - Those who had direct contact with respiratory, oral, or nasal secretions from a symptomatic case-patient (e.g., an explosive cough or sneeze in the face, sharing food, sharing eating utensils during a meal, kissing, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, or performing a medical exam including examination of the nose and throat).
- Contacts who are at high risk of severe illness. Which includes:
 - Women in their third trimester of pregnancy
 - Infants <12 months of age
 - Contacts with pre-existing health conditions that may be exacerbated by a pertussis infection (e.g., immunocompromised persons and patients with moderate to severe medically treated asthma).

- Contacts who themselves have close contact with either infants <12 months of age, pregnant women, or individuals with pre-existing health conditions at risk for severe illness or complications.
- All contacts in high-risk settings that include infants <12 months of age or women in the third trimester of pregnancy, which include but are not limited to, neonatal intensive care units, childcare settings, and maternity wards.

To help protect yourself and others from pertussis and other respiratory illnesses, please:

- Practice good hand hygiene.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Stay home if you have a fever until you have been fever-free for 24 hours without medications.

To prevent the spread of vaccine preventable diseases like pertussis, the Department of Health reiterates the importance of people of all ages to remain up to date on all vaccines, including pertussis vaccine (Tdap), which can be obtained through SHS, your primary care physician or local pharmacies.

Please feel free to contact healthyknights@arcadia.edu or the Montgomery County Office of Public Health at (610) 278-5117 or at MCOPHCommunicable@montgomerycountypa.gov with any questions or concerns.

Additional information can also be found at:

Website: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | [Pertussis \(Whooping Cough\)](#)

Website: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | [5 Things to Know About Whooping Cough](#)

Website: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Whooping Cough \(Pertussis\) Vaccination](#)

Website: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | [Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette](#)

Website: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | [When and How to Wash Your Hands](#)

Website: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | [When and How to Clean and Disinfect Your Home](#)

Infographic: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | [People of All Ages Need Whooping Cough Vaccine \(English\)](#)

Infographic: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | [People of All Ages Need Whooping Cough Vaccine \(Spanish\)](#)

Video: Medical Centric | [Whooping Cough: Causes, Signs and Symptoms, Diagnosis, and Treatment](#)