



Georgia Department of Public Health (GA)

Job Opportunities  
<http://dph.georgia.gov>



Authorities have noted an increased number of pertussis cases (whooping cough) in parts of the State. Pertussis is an infection that affects the airways, and it can easily spread from person to person by coughing or sneezing. Pertussis can cause a severe cough that lasts for weeks or months, sometimes leading to coughing fits and/or vomiting. Anyone can get pertussis, but it can be very dangerous for babies and people with weakened immune systems. Family members with pertussis, especially siblings and parents, can spread pertussis to babies.

### **Recommendations:**

1. If your child has a cough:
  - Keep your child home from school and activities, such as sports or play groups. See items 4 and 5 about when your child can return to these activities.
  - Make an appointment with your child's doctor as soon as possible and tell the doctor that your child may have been exposed to pertussis.
2. If your child has a weakened immune system, ask your child's doctor to prescribe antibiotics to your child as soon as possible to prevent pertussis. Doctors should give antibiotics to a child with a weakened immune system if they may have been exposed to pertussis, even if he or she is not coughing.
3. If your child lives with any of the following people, ask your child's doctor to prescribe antibiotics as soon as possible to your child, even if he or she is not coughing:
  - A woman who is pregnant
  - A baby younger than 12 months old
  - Anyone with a weakened immune system
4. If your child has been diagnosed with pertussis by his or her doctor:
  - Tell the school that a doctor diagnosed your child with pertussis.
  - School officials may request that you keep your child home from school and activities, such as sports or play groups, until your child has been on antibiotics for five days to treat pertussis.
  - Ask your child's doctor for a note that states your child has pertussis.
5. If your child's doctor says your child does NOT have pertussis:
  - Ask for a note from the doctor telling the school that your child's cough is NOT pertussis and that your child can return to school and other activities at any time.

Please make sure your family's vaccinations are up-to-date. Protection against pertussis from the childhood vaccine, DTaP, decreases over time. Older children and adults, including pregnant women, should get a pertussis booster shot called "Tdap" to help protect themselves and babies near or around them. If you need Tdap, contact your doctor or health department to find a vaccine provider near you.



### **Information for Exposed Patients *without* Symptoms:**

As a precaution to help protect vulnerable individuals, we are recommending antibiotic prophylaxis for this patient if he or she shares a household with a woman who is pregnant or an infant less than 12 months old. Alternatively, we are referring this patient to you because he or she has an immunodeficiency or lives with a person with an immunodeficiency and may require antibiotic prophylaxis to help prevent pertussis.

### **For Exposed Patients *with* Symptoms:**

As state authorities continue to work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the following guidelines may help with assessing and treating patients:

#### **For patients coughing <21 days:**

1. Collect nasopharyngeal swabs or aspirate for pertussis PCR testing and/or culture.
2. Do not delay treatment with appropriate antibiotics while waiting for laboratory results if there is no alternative diagnosis.
3. Document and communicate all clinical decisions related to pertussis to the school (this includes children for whom you have ruled out pertussis).
4. Strongly consider antibiotic prophylaxis for all household members if a pregnant woman, an infant less than 12 months old, or anyone with a weakened immune system lives in the household.

#### **For patients coughing $\geq$ 21 days:**

1. Laboratory testing for pertussis is not necessary. CDC does not recommend laboratory testing after 3 weeks of cough since PCR and culture are only sensitive during the first 2 to 3 weeks of cough when bacterial DNA is still present in the nasopharynx.
2. For most patients, antibiotic treatment is not required. Antibiotics are no longer necessary after 21 days of cough, with the following exception: you should treat infants and pregnant women in their third trimester up through 6 weeks after cough onset.
3. The patient is no longer infectious and can return to school.

**For all households:** Administer Tdap to contacts 11 years or older who have not been previously vaccinated with Tdap, DTaP to contacts 2 months through 6 years who are not up-to-date, or refer for vaccination [insert contact]. You can find additional clinical and laboratory guidance on the CDC website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/index.html>

Draft letter posted by CDC August 7, 2017. Available at  
<http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/outbreaks/guidance-letter.html>