



May 2, 2019

Dear Parent or Guardian,

This letter is to inform you that Hellgate Elementary has, at least, one confirmed case of pertussis (whooping cough), a contagious respiratory disease, in the middle school. We request that you monitor your child for symptoms for 21 days from the date on this letter. The Centers for Disease Control also recommends that all children and adults be fully immunized against pertussis. Please see more information about the benefits of immunization and how you can obtain it on the following "Frequently Asked Question" sheet which is located on the school district's website.

Whooping cough starts with the following symptoms:

- Runny stuffed-up nose
- Sneezing
- Mild cough
- A pause in breathing in infants (apnea)

After 1 to 2 weeks, coughing gets worse and can be very severe.

- Children and babies can develop very hard and frequent coughing fits.
- When children gasp for breath after a coughing fit, they sometimes make a "whooping" sound. This sound is where the name "whooping cough" comes from.
- Coughing fits make it hard to breathe, eat, drink, or sleep. Coughing fits happen more at night. The pertussis cough can last for 10 weeks.
- Babies and young children may turn blue while coughing from lack of oxygen.

If your child develops any of these symptoms, please do not have them attend school or work, until they have seen your health care provider for assessment and testing.

Some people are at higher risk for complications from pertussis, including:

- Infants 12 months or age and younger
- People with underlying respiratory or cardiovascular conditions
- People whose immune systems are compromised
- Pregnant women

If you or someone in your household is high-risk, please contact your health care provider now to discuss a course of antibiotics to keep you from developing the disease; do not wait for symptoms to appear.

If you have any questions, please contact the Infectious Disease Office at the Missoula City-County Health Department at **(406)258-INFO**. Thank you for your help to control the spread of this disease.

Sincerely,

Missoula City-County Health
Department Infectious Disease Staff