



Pat Quinn, Governor

525-535 West Jefferson Street • Springfield, Illinois 62761-0001 • www.idph.state.il.us

January 25, 2012

Dear Parent:

Numerous outbreaks of pertussis (whooping cough) have occurred recently among school children in Illinois. Pertussis is easily transmitted through coughing and sneezing and may cause an illness that persists for weeks to months. Pertussis does not typically cause severe illness in healthy students, but can cause prolonged absences from school and extracurricular activities. In addition, pertussis can be transmitted from healthy students to infants and individuals with chronic illnesses, for whom pertussis can be life-threatening.

Protection against pertussis begins to wear off during grade school. This leaves pre-teens, teenagers and adults at risk for this illness. To address the increase in pertussis cases among older students, a booster vaccination (called Tdap) is recommended for all students in grades six through twelve.

This fall, students entering sixth and ninth grades will be required to provide proof of Tdap vaccination along with the school physical forms that are also required for these grades.

Students in these grades without one of the following will be subject to exclusion:

1. Proof of Tdap vaccination
2. An approved medical or religious exemption on file with the school,
3. An appointment to receive the Tdap shot during the school year.

See the "Frequently Asked Questions About the Tdap Vaccine Requirement" for more information.

Many providers, local pharmacies and most local health departments provide Tdap vaccinations. Many providers participate in the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program, which provides vaccines at no cost to doctors who serve Medicaid-eligible children younger than 19 years of age. If you need assistance, check with your local health department for resources for getting Tdap vaccination.

Check with your doctor if you are not sure if your child has received Tdap, and if not, get your child vaccinated.

Healthy children are best prepared to learn and thrive inside and outside our schools.