



Pertussis (Whooping Cough) in Child Care Settings

What is pertussis?

Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a disease that affects the lungs. It is caused by a bacteria that can be spread through the air. Anyone of any age can get pertussis. A person with pertussis develops a severe cough that usually lasts four to six weeks or longer. Pertussis can be very serious, especially for infants.

Suspect pertussis in child care?

If you become aware of a suspected or confirmed case of pertussis in a child or staff member in your child care facility, notify public health officials as soon as possible.

Action steps

- Be aware of symptoms and consider pertussis in any child or staff member who has a cough lasting more than two weeks or a severe cough that occurs in sudden, uncontrollable bursts, especially if followed by vomiting.
- Encourage them to see a health care provider
- Report all suspected or confirmed cases of pertussis to the Alaska Section of Epidemiology (AK-SOE) at 907-269-8000.

Public health investigators will contact the person's health care provider to determine whether a diagnosis of pertussis is confirmed. They will also work with you and the patient (or parent/guardian) to address questions and concerns, plan appropriate notifications, and implement prevention and control measures, as needed.

Do I need to exclude the child or staff member?

Exclude individuals only if necessary.

See [Pertussis: School, Child Care, Team Sports, and Other Organized Activity Exclusion Recommendations](#) for additional information.

(<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/SiteAssets/Pages/Pertussis/PertussisSchoolExclusion.pdf>) for additional guidance.

Do I need to close the child care facility due to pertussis?

No. We do not recommend closing child care due to

outbreaks of pertussis. There is no evidence that it prevents the spread of disease, as children may gather in other settings.

If a staff member has pertussis in a home child care setting, consult with the AK-SOE.

What else can be done to keep pertussis from spreading?

- Promote Tdap vaccine for staff, room helpers and volunteers.
- Remind parents about the importance of keeping their children up-to-date on the DTaP vaccine series.
- Encourage hand washing and covering of coughs.
- Remind staff and children (via parents) to stay home if ill. For guidance on how long someone should stay home, see [Pertussis: Recommendations for Exclusion from School, Camps, Team Sports, and Organized Activities](#) (<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/SiteAssets/Pages/Pertussis/PertussisSchoolExclusion.pdf>)
- Have staff and children seek medical attention if they develop pertussis-like symptoms or have been exposed to someone with pertussis.

State or local public health will help child care settings:

- Identify close contacts of the case.
- Determine high-risk contacts who should receive antibiotics.
- Inform others in your child care about pertussis -- especially if pertussis in the facility generates a lot of questions and concerns or if a cluster or outbreak of cases occurs.

If you have questions or concerns, contact AK-SOE at 907-269-8000 or see [Pertussis \(whooping cough\)](#) (<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/dod/pertussis/pertussis.aspx>)

Fact sheet adapted from Minnesota Department of Health, July 2015.
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/pertussis/school/pchildcare.pdf>