



## Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Guidance for Parents/Guardians

From: Jennifer Hare, CPA, Garrett County Health Officer | Sent: February 2, 2026

### If your child develops symptoms:

- Keep your child home from school and activities
- Contact your child's healthcare provider right away
- Tell the provider if your child may have been exposed to whooping cough

### If your child is diagnosed with whooping cough:

- Inform the school of the diagnosis
- Keep your child home until they have completed **5 full days of antibiotics**
- A doctor's note may be required for school records

### If your child has symptoms but does NOT have whooping cough:

- The school may request a note from the healthcare provider
- Your child may return to school following school illness policies

### If your child has NO symptoms but had close contact:

Close contact includes:

- Living in the same household
- Face-to-face contact with a sick person
- Being within 3 feet of a sick person for at least one hour
- Contact with respiratory secretions (coughing, sneezing, sharing utensils)

### What parents should do:

- Ask your healthcare provider if preventive antibiotics are needed
- Watch your child for symptoms for **21 days after exposure**

### Preventive antibiotics are often recommended for:

- Household contacts
- Infants under 12 months
- People with certain health conditions
- Those who care for or live with high-risk individuals, including pregnant women and infants

**Remember:** *The best way to protect your children and the school community—especially infants too young to be vaccinated—is to ensure older siblings, parents and grandparents, remain up to date on their whooping cough (pertussis) vaccination, with DTaP for younger children and regular Tdap boosters for older children and adults.*

**Contact:** Garrett County Health Department Personal Health Unit, Jessica Carey, MSN Ed., CRNP

**Questions:** 301-334-7770 or [gchd.personalhealth@maryland.gov](mailto:gchd.personalhealth@maryland.gov)



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