11 February 2015

NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS OF SCHOOL COMMUNITY

RE: NOTIFICATION OF WHOOPING COUGH

We have been informed that one of our students has contracted Whooping Cough. We have outlined below some general guidelines for your information.

Whooping cough is a bacterial infection of the nose and throat caused by Bordetella pertussis. The illness often begins with cold-like symptoms of runny nose, sore watery red eyes, low-grade fever and general unwellness, although these symptoms are not present in all people. After three to seven days, a dry cough develops. The cough is usually present for many weeks and may last for months. Coughing is classically paroxysmal, that is, a prolonged fit of coughing occurs. The coughing is immediately followed by a deep breath in, resulting in the typical whoop – hence the name ‘whooping cough’. Some people do not whoop, but coughing may be followed by vomiting.

Diagnosis is most accurately made by PCR testing of mucus from the nose and throat, combined with clinical history, although blood tests are still used in some places.

Incubation period (time between becoming infected and developing symptoms) 6 – 20 days, most commonly 7 – 10 days.

Infectious period (time during which an infected person can infect others)

Pertussis is highly infectious when the ‘cold-like’ symptoms occur in the early stages. Without treatment, a person is infectious for the first 3 weeks of coughing. With appropriate antibiotic therapy, the person is no longer infectious to others 5 days after starting antibiotics.

Treatment

Appropriate antibiotic therapy, given in the early stages of infection, may prevent or lessen the severity of symptoms. Treatment within three weeks of onset of the cough reduces the spread of Antibiotic treatment of the person with whooping cough and their household contacts will reduce the spread of the infection. It is important that anyone with suspicious symptoms see their doctor so that an accurate diagnosis can be made and treatment commenced, if necessary.

A person with whooping cough should be excluded from child care, preschool, school or work until five days after starting antibiotic treatment. If not treated, they should be excluded for 21 days from the start of symptoms.

Any child care, preschool, school or work contacts of a person with whooping cough should seek medical advice if they develop any symptoms.