

## Seasonal Health Update

Cough illnesses are always a problem in the school setting. Pertussis (Whooping cough) and influenza are communicable diseases of particular concern.

**Pertussis** is a bacterial disease that is spread through the air by direct face-to-face contact with a case of pertussis. Pertussis begins with cold-like symptoms and a cough, which becomes much worse over 1-2 weeks. Symptoms usually include a long series of coughs ("coughing spasms") followed by a whooping noise. However, older children, adults, and very young infants may not develop the whoop. People with pertussis may have a repetitive cough accompanied by gagging, vomiting, or difficulty catching breath. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help alleviate the cough. **When not coughing, individuals with pertussis generally do not feel ill and there is little or no fever.**

The disease is most serious in un-immunized infants and preschoolers. If you have preschool children at home, make sure they are up-to-date with their immunizations.

**If you or your child develops symptoms suggestive of pertussis, please stay at home – no school, work or social activities until pertussis disease has been ruled out or you have completed 5 days of antibiotic treatment.**

**Influenza** is a viral disease that can affect people of all ages and is spread through the air or by touching contaminated surfaces. **Generally, persons with influenza feel quite ill.** Symptoms may include a fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Most people recover in about a week, although a mild cough or fatigue may continue for several more days or longer. Influenza can last longer and cause life-threatening complications in pregnant women, small children, elderly persons and persons with chronic medical conditions. To prevent getting the flu, wash your hands often, avoid touching your nose, eyes and mouth, stay away from sick people, and encourage them to stay home. The best way to prevent the flu is to get an annual flu shot.

**If you or your child develops symptoms of influenza, stay home for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine and consult with your physician if you have a medical condition or have other concerns.**

\*\*\*Please note, even if you have had the Pertussis and Influenza Vaccines, you can still become infected. Please continue to monitor your family for symptoms, and consult with your physician if you have any concerns.

Disease fact sheets can be found online at:

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p4/p42147.pdf> Pertussis

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/P4/P42064.pdf> Seasonal Influenza

If you have any questions or concerns you may also call the Brown County Health Department at (920) 448-6400