



**LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**REFERENCE GUIDE**

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**TITLE:** Pertussis Response Guide for the 2010-2011 School Year

**NUMBER:** REF-5238

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Student Health and Human Services

Earl R. Perkins, Assistant Superintendent  
School Operations

**DATE:** October 4, 2010

**ROUTING**  
All Schools and Offices

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Reference Guide is to provide guidance to schools on the protocols and procedures that will be used to respond to pertussis (whooping cough) cases and outbreaks during the 2010-2011 school year.

**MAJOR CHANGES:** New Reference Guide.

**BACKGROUND:** Pertussis (or whooping cough) is a bacterial disease that has reached epidemic proportions in California this year (2010). Pertussis is a vaccine-preventable disease, but immunity wanes over time, which may account for the increasing number of cases in California. The bacterium that causes pertussis is spread when individuals are in close contact to an infected person who coughs or sneezes. The early signs of disease are hard to distinguish from a common cold. The symptoms often worsen over several weeks and consist of severe coughing attacks and associated breathing problems. Pertussis is most dangerous to newborn infants, as they have more difficulty breathing if they are infected; and they may not have developed immunity or received a full series of immunizations. Pertussis is treatable with antibiotics. In an effort to prevent the spread of pertussis, there are certain steps schools and families can take that are outlined in this reference guide.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** I. At the beginning of the school year, educate and train students, families, and staff on ways to reduce the spread of respiratory illnesses, like pertussis.

In the Fall of 2010, schools will have access to the new on-line LAUSD CD Toolkit that will assist site administration to produce messages to parents about public health issues in the school's community. The toolkit's contents and use will be covered in a separate Reference Guide.



- A. **Health Education Messages.** Health education materials are critical because the impact and spread of pertussis can be reduced or eliminated by information and education. Health education will also mitigate unreasonable fear and reduce behavior or actions that will be disruptive to school activities. Everyone at school should follow and help reinforce with students safe and healthy hygiene practices. To prevent the spread of disease, all members of the school community should do the following:
1. **Cover** your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze.
  2. **Wash** your hands frequently using water and soap for 20 seconds each time. Waterless hand cleaner, available from the Stores Warehouse (CC 435-70-38045), can supplement but not replace hand washing with soap and water.
  3. **Practice healthy habits.** Get enough rest; eat nutritious foods, and exercise to maintain a strong body to be able to fight infections.
  4. **Avoid close contact** with sick people.
  5. **Stay home** if you are sick and seek medical attention if cough is severe.
  6. When sick, **avoid contact with infants and babies.**
  7. Consult with your health care provider to see if you need a **pertussis vaccine or booster.**
- B. **Infection Control Practices.** Schools will also need to follow good infection control practices. This includes posting educational materials on infection control and ensuring individuals are up-to-date on their pertussis vaccine.
1. Schools are required to follow California Immunization Law to determine school entry immunization requirements. Most students will need 5 doses of a pertussis-containing vaccine (DTaP) by Kindergarten (age 4 to 6 years old).
  2. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends a pertussis booster (Tdap) for adolescents 11 to 18 years old. While not required for school attendance, the booster helps decrease the spread of disease and absences due to illness.
  3. The California Department of Public Health recommends that all persons without documentation of full immunization against pertussis be immunized, especially persons in the following priority groups: women of childbearing age, parents and caretakers of infants and health care personnel. (See Department of Public Health website.)



4. Post “Wash Your Hands/Cover Your Cough” posters and signs. These free materials are available in eight languages from <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/respiratoryhygiene.htm>.
5. Ensure that there is always a good supply of towels and soap in all bathrooms.
6. Remind students and staff to wash their hands often, using soap and water or District approved alcohol-free hand sanitizer (CC 435-70-38045)
7. Provide tissues (CC 640-50-77100) throughout the campus and encourage the use and the immediate disposal in the trash.
8. Do not routinely wear masks, as they have **not** been shown to be effective in controlling pertussis or protecting the user. They are not recommended for use by the general public
9. Follow standard routine cleaning and maintenance schedules.

## II. **Managing pertussis in schools**

All schools and offices are expected to follow the safe hygiene and infection control practices. In addition, schools will need to monitor their campus to restrict or isolate students and staff who have active pertussis symptoms. Students and employees who come to work with symptoms may infect others; they must be told to go home and recover before they can return. Students who become sick during the school day should rest in the Health Office until they are released to a parent or guardian.

### A. **Identification and Reporting of Illness**

In the early stages of disease, school staff will not be able to distinguish pertussis from other respiratory illnesses. Signs and symptoms of pertussis include:

- Symptoms begin like a common cold
- Coughing may progress to severe coughing bouts which may cause:
  - Vomiting
  - Difficulty breathing
  - Blue color (cyanosis)
  - “Whooping” sound (a high-pitched crowing sound) when inhaling
- Coughing persists for weeks to months
- Fever is usually absent or low-grade
- Symptoms are more severe in infants and children less than one year.

Based on these signs and symptoms of pertussis, all school personnel should:

1. Refer students with pertussis symptoms to the Health Office for assessment.



2. Notify school nurse or principal designee when parents report, or student or staff self-report, a pertussis/whooping cough diagnosis.
3. **Maintain medical confidentiality** at all times of any suspected case. Schools must be aware that all student health information is **confidential and protected by federal law**. District employees are not to access, share or reveal student health information to anyone who is not providing direct medical care to the student.
4. Schools will also need to monitor attendance and absence rates due to illness. Unusual illness or clusters of illness in any school or classroom should be reported to the school nurse or principal designee.

The school nurse or principal designee should:

1. Promptly assess students or staff who come to the Health Office or are sent to the office by school personnel.
2. Determine if the student or staff member meets any criteria for exclusion (e.g., severe or prolonged cough, difficulty breathing) and notify parents/guardian of the student if exclusion is warranted.
3. Keep students with pertussis symptoms in the Health Office until they can be released to a parent/guardian. Consider keeping ill students relatively isolated from other students and staff through distancing and/or placement in a separate, observable area (cot room).
4. Explain to parents or guardians the nature of the exclusion and that the student should not return to school until they have recovered, been evaluated by medical personnel, or have met routine illness readmission criteria. School staff that has questions about the re-admittance of students should contact their school nurse or the Local District Nursing Office.
5. **Report confirmed or suspected cases of pertussis immediately to the Local District Nursing Office and the Communicable Disease Nurse at 213-765-2805.** See BUL-1937.1, "[Reporting Communicable Diseases.](#)"
6. Report pertussis cases that involve an employee to Employee Health Services at 213-241-6326, in addition to the reporting to Nursing Services.
7. Assist with any follow-up investigation deemed necessary by District Nursing Services in coordination with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Schools should be prepared to provide attendance data and student contact information for the impacted grade levels or classrooms.

#### B. Notification

In general, notification of parents, staff, and the school community is reserved for instances where:

- there is a serious disease;
- individuals in the school were likely exposed to the infectious agent;



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- there is a recommended action to prevent the progression or spread of disease; and
- the time period in which the recommended action is effective has not passed.

Most cases of coughing in children are due to illnesses other than pertussis, and are **not** cause for parent or staff notification. However, schools should use the following guidance when notifying parents, staff or community about pertussis:

1. At the principal's discretion, a copy of the California School Nurses Organization health update letter about pertussis may be copied on school letterhead and sent to parents and staff. This letter is not a notification of disease, but an informational letter that can be used to increase awareness of the pertussis epidemic (Attachments A & B, available in English and Spanish languages).
2. Upon reporting a case of pertussis to District Nursing, confer with Communicable Disease Nurse at 213-765-2805 and Local District Nursing if any other type of notification letter is recommended by the Department of Public Health.
3. Use **only** Department of Public Health letters provided by District Nursing Services or Student Medical Services on pertussis notification to avoid any miscommunication or false information from being distributed.
4. Confer with District Nursing Services or Student Medical Services if any other type of message (e.g., telephone, e-mail, etc.) is being contemplated.
5. Schools must follow-up with District Nursing and School Operations if a parent notification is sent.

Student Medical Services, District Nursing Services, Employee Health Services, and School Operations will do the following:

1. Work with schools to provide appropriate notification and translation of materials.
  2. Work with LAC DPH to coordinate reporting, notification, and other necessary outbreak response.
  3. Inform LAUSD Communications office when parent or staff notification is sent.
  4. Send a Board Informative detailing the nature of the notification, when needed.
- C. Readmission. In general, students and staff that have been excluded from school due to suspected or confirmed pertussis, may return to school after the following conditions have been met:



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- If students or staff were symptomatic, they should be excluded from school until they have received 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment.
- If students or staff were symptomatic and did not take antimicrobial treatment, they should be excluded from school for 21 days from the onset of cough. These types of cases and exclusions should be discussed and managed with District Nursing Communicable Disease Nurse.
- If students or staff were excluded for other reasons (e.g., they were close contacts with a case or they were not up-to-date with their immunizations), the Department of Public Health or treating health care provider will guide readmission.

Schools should confer with District Nursing Communicable Disease Nurse at 213-765-2805 or Local District Nursing if there are any questions about readmission.

### **RELATED RESOURCES:**

Attachments A & B: California School Nurses Organization health update letter for parents in English and Spanish

On-Line LAUSD Toolkit: [www.laschooltoolkit.com/lausd](http://www.laschooltoolkit.com/lausd)

LAUSD Pertussis Website: <http://pertussis.lausd.net>

BUL-1937.1, "Reporting Communicable Diseases," dated April 7, 2008

BUL-1645.1, "Infection Control Guidelines for Preventing the Spread of Communicable Diseases," dated April 7, 2008

REF-1954, "Communicable Disease in Schools" dated September 1, 2005.

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health website:  
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/Diseases/Pertussis.htm>

California Department of Public Health website:  
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Pertussis.aspx>

Materials, flyers, posters from EZ-IZ:  
[http://eziz.org/resources/materials\\_pertussis.html](http://eziz.org/resources/materials_pertussis.html)



# LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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**ASSISTANCE:** District Student Nursing Services 213-765-2800  
Employee Health Services 213-241-6326  
Office of Emergency Services 213-241-3889  
School Operations 213-241-4133  
Student Medical Services 213-765-2830

<u>Local District</u>	<u>Nursing Coordinator Telephone No.</u>	<u>Operations Coordinator Telephone No.</u>
1	818-654-1670	818-654-3600
2	818-654-1670	818-755-5300
3	323-421-2807	310-253-7100
4	213-241-0106	213-241-0100
5	213-241-0106	323-224-3190
6	310-354-3550	323-278-3900
7	323-421-2807	323-242-1300
8	310-354-3550	310-354-3400



**Health Update: Whooping Cough (also called pertussis)  
Epidemic & Tdap Vaccine Availability  
TEMPLATE**

Dear Parents and/or Guardians of ELEMENTARY SCHOOL Students:  
Dear Parents and/or Guardians of MIDDLE SCHOOL Students:

School's back in session and you're already busy juggling new schedules. But did you know there's a whooping cough (also called pertussis) epidemic in California? Whooping cough can cause a violent cough at any age and can kill young babies.

Know how to protect yourself against whooping cough and **seek medical care promptly if you or anyone in your family might have whooping cough**. Whooping cough starts out like a common cold, and is often followed within days by severe coughing spells (young babies may not cough and disease can be milder in older children and adults). The disease can spread easily at school or home.

Fortunately, there's a vaccine to protect your children and family against whooping cough. You and your child may have been immunized between infancy and kindergarten. However, this protection wears off over time. A booster shot is recommended for all children and adults 10 years of age and older to help prevent getting whooping cough, especially if there is a new baby at home now or coming soon. **Talk with your doctor about getting immunized!**

Whooping cough vaccines have been proven to be safe and effective. The most common side-effect is soreness at the injection site.

If you don't have health insurance, ask your local health department about the Vaccines for Children Program. This program provides free vaccines to children 18 years of age and younger.

Other vaccines recommended for your student. Protect against:

Kindergarten or older: Influenza – vaccinate each fall or winter; and Chickenpox  
6<sup>th</sup> grade or older: Meningitis, Cervical Cancer [HPV]

**A message from your school nurse, the California School Nurses Organization,  
the California Department of Public Health and  
[insert local health department contact information].**



California School Nurses Organization  
1225 8th Ave. Suite 500  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Ph: (916) 448-5752  
Fax: (916) 448-5767  
[www.csno.org](http://www.csno.org)



**Noticias sobre la Salud: Tos Ferina (también conocida como Pertussis)  
Disponibilidad de la Vacuna Epidémica & Tdap  
PLANTILLA**

Estimados Padres y/o Tutores Legales de alumnos en ESCUELAS PRIMARIAS:  
Estimados Padres y/o Tutores Legales de alumnos en ESCUELAS SECUNDARIAS:

Han reanudado las clases y ustedes ya estarán atareados organizando sus horarios. Pero, ¿sabían que hay una epidemia de tos ferina (también conocida como Pertussis) en California? La tos ferina puede causar una violenta tos a cualquier edad y puede causar la muerte a infantes.

Hay que saber protegerse de la Tos Ferina y **solicitar atención médica oportunamente si usted o algún miembro de su familia presenta tiene tos ferina.** La tos ferina empieza como una tos común, y por lo general al transcurso de unos días se manifiesta con ataques severos de tos, (los bebés más pequeños posiblemente no tosan y la tos podría tener síntomas menos severos en niños mayores y adultos). Esta enfermedad es de contagio fácil en la escuela o en el hogar.

Afortunadamente, existe una vacuna para proteger a sus niños y a su familia contra la tos ferina. Es posible que usted y que su hijo hayan sido vacunados durante la época entre la infancia y el Kindergarten. No obstante, esta protección suele disiparse con el tiempo. Se recomienda un refuerzo para todos los niños de por lo menos 10 años de edad y adultos, para ayudar a prevenir la tos ferina, especialmente si hay un infante en el hogar o está por nacer. **Hable con su doctor para la vacunación.**

Se ha determinado que las vacunas contra la tos ferina son seguras y eficaces. El efecto secundario es dolor en la zona de la inyección.

Si no tiene seguro de salud, averigüe sobre el Programa Infantil de Vacunación en la clínica de su localidad. Este programa proporciona vacunación gratuita para niños de 0 a 18 años.

Otras vacunas que se recomiendan para su hijo. Protéjase contra:

Kindergarten o mayor - Influenza – vacunarse en otoño o invierno o Varicela  
6° grado o mayor: Meningitis, Cáncer del útero [HPV]

**Mensaje de su enfermera escolar - Organización de Enfermeras Escolares de California,  
Secretaría de California para Servicios de Salud y  
[datos de contacto d la entidad médica local ].**



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