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Dear Parents,

We received word today that a case of pertussis has been confirmed in a second Stevens school fifth grader. This is a child who recently spent time in close contact with our first confirmed case.

All the background information that I sent home earlier this week (and had posted on our website) about pertussis still applies. This is a highly contagious disease that is spread through the air, primarily through coughing. It is treatable with antibiotics, but can be serious in small infants who are too young to have received any immunizations against it, and in the elderly or anyone whose immune system is compromised.

Some parents have asked whether the school is taking the extra surface cleaning measures that were used against the H1N1 flu a few years ago. We have learned from the Saratoga and the Schenectady County Health Departments that such measures are not effective against pertussis because it is spread through the air, face to face (within three feet of a symptomatic patient), and has a very short life span on surfaces.

The school is following the advice of the Health Departments and is focusing on the following. I ask that parents help us in this regard, too.

- Teach children to cough into a tissue or into their sleeve (crook of their elbow), rather than into their hands. Then to place the used tissue promptly in the waste basket and to wash their hands.
- Remind children & adults about proper hand washing technique, including the use of hot water & soap.
- Keep bathrooms well supplied with soap and paper towels. Hand sanitizers can also be helpful in situations where soap and water are not available.

Hopefully we can soon stop the spread of this illness. If you question whether or not your child should receive preventative treatment, we suggest you contact your child's primary care provider or the Saratoga County Department of Health @ 584-7460. Any further updates will be posted on the Stevens homepage at <http://bhbl.org/Stevens/stevensel.htm>

Respectfully,

Ralph K. Rothacker