

HALTON REGION HEALTH DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
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TO: Halton Physicians
Medical Chiefs of Staff: Joseph Brant Hospital, Halton Healthcare (Oakville, Milton and Georgetown Hospitals)
Chairs of: Family Practice, Paediatrics, Internal Medicine, Emergency, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Surgery
Chief of Laboratory Services and Infection Control Practitioners
Halton Midwives

POST IN: Emergency Department and Physicians Lounge

FROM: Dr. Joanna Oda, Associate Medical Officer of Health

DATE: April 15, 2019

RE: Pertussis Activity in Halton Region

Increased Pertussis Cases and Waning Immunity

Over the past month, the Halton Region Health Department has seen an increased number of pertussis cases in the Georgetown area and an outbreak has been declared at Centennial Middle School. Some of these cases have had a complete primary pertussis vaccine series (age 2, 4, 6, and 18 months) and first booster (age 4-6 years), but had not yet received their 14 to 16 year booster. Recent evidence has demonstrated that pertussis immunity does wane over time, from around 80% effective at one year to 40% at 8 years post-vaccination. This makes middle school children particularly vulnerable to pertussis.

Vaccinate Your Patients When Eligible

The Halton Region Health Department is asking clinicians to ensure that their patients are up to date with their pertussis immunization. Please invite your 14 year-old patients to get their vaccine as soon as they are eligible, and call in older children who may have missed this dose. Adults are also eligible for a single booster dose.

Think Pertussis

Given the current increase in cases, consider pertussis as part of the differential diagnosis for patients with a prolonged cough or 'whoop'. If pertussis is suspected, please test using a nasopharyngeal swab prior to beginning treatment and report to the Health Department at 311. **For patients with a link to Centennial Middle School, please include the Outbreak Number "HAL-2019-001" on the lab requisition.** Testing recommendations can be found on the [Public Health Ontario Laboratory](#) website. After testing, the most appropriate antibiotic is a macrolide (azithromycin or clarithromycin).

Protecting Contacts and the Community

Children with suspected or confirmed pertussis should be advised to remain home from school until five days after the start of appropriate antibiotic therapy. Post exposure chemoprophylaxis is recommended for only household contacts and close contacts (shared confined space for more than one hour) who are infants (less than one year) or pregnant women in their third trimester.

The Halton Region Health Department is always available by calling 311 to assist with testing recommendations, and case and contact follow up.

Please report all suspected or confirmed cases of [Diseases of Public Health Significance](#) (formerly Reportable Diseases) to the Halton Region Health Department as soon as possible. Diseases marked * should be reported immediately by telephone (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) or fax (Mon-Fri, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm only). Other diseases can be reported the next working day. Call 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866. For general information, please visit [halton.ca](#).

If any link provided in this memo does not work, please cut and paste it into your web browser.