Pertussis
Employee and Family Information Sheet

Cause and Transmission: Pertussis is caused by the bacterium Bordetella Pertussis. Whooping cough gets its name from the whooping sound a child makes when trying to draw in a breath after a coughing spell. The infection is transmitted by person to person contact with respiratory tract secretions, or via aerosolized droplets produced from a cough or sneeze. Contact includes close or prolonged interaction with the patient, such as performing a physical examination, suctioning, intubating, performing bronchoscopy, feeding, or bathing. Contact also includes anyone having direct contact with respiratory, oral, or nasal secretions from a symptomatic patient or sharing the same confined space in close proximity for one or more hours.

Symptoms: First 2 weeks: runny nose with intermittent non-productive cough (similar to a head cold). Next 2-4 weeks: severe coughing spells, whooping, and post coughing vomiting. Final 2-6 weeks: symptoms slowly resolve. Complications include: worsening cough, fever/chills, drowsiness, inability to take in fluids, and seizures.

Incubation Period: Six to 21 days (average 7-10 days) after exposure to the bacteria.

Period of communicability: A person is considered to be contagious, if untreated, from the time the first symptoms appear until 3 weeks after the onset of coughing spells. Persons started on antibiotics are considered non-infectious after completing 5 days of antibiotic therapy.

Prevention of Transmission: Antibiotic prophylaxis is given to individuals who have had close contact with the infected patient during the time the illness is contagious. The infected patient is placed in Droplet Precaution Isolation.

What to Do: If you think you have had close contact with a patient with Pertussis discuss this immediately with your charge nurse or Supervisor. There is a procedure in place for dealing with exposures to Pertussis. You will be provided with an antibiotic free of charge if you have had close contact with the infected patient. If you develop any of the above symptoms or complications after contact with the infected patient, call Employee Health immediately (4-8199) during office hours (Monday through Friday, 0700-1600). If it is after hours or a holiday, go to Urgent Care. If you are having seizures, go to the UCDMC Emergency department.

Work Status: Employees with symptoms of Pertussis shall be excluded from working until they have had at least 5 days of antimicrobial treatment. Employees with symptoms of Pertussis who cannot or will not (refuse to) take antimicrobial therapy will be excluded from working for 21 days from the onset of cough.

Family Members/Household Contacts: You are not at risk for acquiring this infection unless the employee becomes ill. You should monitor your self for the above symptoms. Should you become ill you need to contact your primary provider.