



Hermon school reports whooping cough case as infections soar nationwide

by **Marie Weidmayer**

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A case of whooping cough has been confirmed at a Hermon-area school this week.

The highly contagious bacterial infection was reported within one of the Hermon schools, according to a Tuesday letter to parents from Superintendent Barbara Sargent that was obtained by the Bangor Daily News.

Sargent did not say in which of Hermon's three schools the infection occurred.

Hermon schools join a nationwide trend as pertussis infections, commonly known as whooping cough, are on the rise, with more than 10,000 yearly cases, according to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). The easily spread infection can cause

severe complications, especially for infants.

“The best thing that anyone can do is get vaccinated,” Dr. Alexander Campbell, a Northern Light resident physician said. “That is the best prevention we have.”

Hermon families should make sure their pertussis booster vaccine — known as DTaP for young children and Tdap for adults — is up to date, Sargent said.

The vaccine doesn’t provide lifelong immunity and wears off, so boosters are essential, Campbell said.

A child with a severe cough should be kept home from school and other activities, Sargent said. A person is most contagious for two weeks after a cough begins.

If a doctor diagnoses pertussis, the child should be kept home until the course of antibiotics is completed, Sargent said. Someone with symptoms but no antibiotics should stay home for 21 days after the onset of symptoms.

When someone is diagnosed with pertussis that person is given antibiotics, and everyone who lives in the same household should be prescribed antibiotics too, regardless of vaccination status, because it is so contagious, Campbell said.

Cases of pertussis were six times higher in 2024 than in 2023, according to the CDC. Cases were lower than usual in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic, but cases surged past 2019 levels in 2024.

Infants with whooping cough may not have the “whoop” cough, but instead struggle to breathe, **the CDC said.**

Pertussis in older children and adults can cause coughing fits that last for up to 10 weeks, and may result in vomiting. People typically struggle to sleep and may break a rib from coughing fits, the CDC said.

There are vaccine guidelines for people who haven't received the pertussis series and for people who need a booster. It's reasonable for adults to get a booster shot, even if they don't know when their last vaccine was, Campbell said.

People with questions or concerns should contact their doctor, Campbell said.

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