Pertussis Disease Alert
Important Notice
March 8, 2016

To: Staff and students living in Parmelee Hall and Instructors of Public Speaking 200-033, Math 101-L02 & 002, British Lit E277-002, Reading Without Borders E142-001, Intro to Poetry E240-003

A student at Colorado State University, living at Parmelee Hall and attending classes at CSU, has been diagnosed with pertussis (also known as whooping cough) confirmed through laboratory testing and may have been infectious and able to pass the infection on to other individuals. The ill student has been being treated with antibiotics to stop further spread of the infection.

The state of Colorado and Larimer County has been experiencing an outbreak of Pertussis cases since 2012. Pertussis is a contagious illness that is spread when an infected person sneezes or coughs and another individual breathes in the bacteria. Symptoms of pertussis usually develop 7 to 10 days after exposure to pertussis, but can develop from 4 to 21 days after exposure.

Students and staff with a cough should inform their physician of the possible exposure to pertussis and be examined. If your physician suspects pertussis you should be tested and receive an appropriate antibiotic for pertussis. Students or staff diagnosed with pertussis cannot return to school until completing five days (5) of an appropriate antibiotic.

Pertussis begins with a cough and cold-like symptoms that progressively becomes more severe until the person develops coughing fits. In between coughing fits, the individual may look and feel fine. Vomiting, breathlessness, a change in facial color, and/or a whooping sound may follow the coughing fits. Pertussis can occur in immunized individuals, because the immunity gained from vaccination typically wanes by adolescence. The illness can last from six to ten weeks. Disease symptoms vary with age and vaccination status, with milder illness generally seen among fully vaccinated persons.

Our primary goal is to prevent pertussis in infants and very young children and anyone with a medical condition that would be complicated because of pertussis. Pertussis can be particularly severe in infants under 12 months of age and in persons with any chronic respiratory disease such as asthma.
Children should be routinely immunized against pertussis with a series of three shots as infants, a booster dose at 15 to 18 months, before school entry at four to six years of age and prior to entering Middle School at age 11. A vaccine (Tdap) for adolescents and adults is available through health care providers or your local health department. The vaccine provides protection against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis and is highly recommended for all health care personnel and for those who have close contact with infants.

The health and safety of our community is our top priority and we are taking all possible steps to prevent others from potentially becoming ill.

In summary, we recommend the following:

- If you have a respiratory infection with a cough now or develop pertussis-like symptoms, do not expose others to the cough. Consult with your health care provider and inform him/her that there may have been an exposure to pertussis so that appropriate testing and treatment can be considered. Consult with your health care provider, the CSU Health Network, or your local health department to ensure immunizations (Tdap) are up to date. Vaccine is available from most private physicians, CSU Health Network, or your County Health Department.

- Household members and those with close face-to-face contact with a known pertussis case can be treated preventively with appropriate antibiotics to stop further spread of the infection. Antibiotics can prevent the development of the illness or make it less severe.

- If diagnosed with pertussis complete a course of an appropriate antibiotic for pertussis to stop further spread of the infection.

- Individuals diagnosed with pertussis will be excluded from work/school/child care/camps until they have completed 5 days of an appropriate antibiotic.

- Review the DTaP/Tdap immunization records of all members of your household and arrange for vaccination if not up to date.

- If you have questions about Pertussis, call your health care provider, Jeannine Riess with CSU Public Health at 970-491-6121, Beverly Earley with the CSU Health Network at 491-1778, or the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment at 970-498-6700.

- Please call the CSU Health Network Immunizations clinic (491-1778) or your health care provider to inquire about clinic appointments and vaccination options.