

BY EMAIL  
TRANSLATION

Quebec City, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024

TO PARENTS AND STAFF MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS IN QUEBEC  
SCHOOLS

**Subject: Rise in whooping cough in Quebec**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to inform you that the type of bacteria that causes whooping cough is circulating in Quebec. Outbreaks of whooping cough have been reported to the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux in several regions. So far, in 2024, the people most affected are young people age 10 to 14.

As the disease circulates in the community, outbreaks primary and secondary schools across the province are anticipated at the start of the school year. This letter is intended to raise awareness among parents of children and school employees that whooping cough transmission is still active and to take appropriate preventive and protective measures.

**Information about whooping cough**

- It is a respiratory infection caused by bacteria.
- The disease evolves in stages and lasts a few weeks. In the first few days, it is like a cold with a runny nose, mild cough, mild fever and watery eyes.
- Then a cough develops and can last several weeks (one to six weeks, sometimes longer). The cough has the following characteristics:

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- Coughing fits (prolonged, hard-to-control coughing spells that may be followed by a symptom-free period);
- Cough with a crowing sound (loud whistling sound when breathing in at the end of the coughing fit);
- Coughing ending in vomiting, gagging or difficulty catching your breath.

People at risk of serious complications include newborns whose mothers did not receive the whooping cough vaccine during pregnancy and infants under 12 months of age who have not received the first two doses of the vaccine.

### **How to protect yourself and your child from whooping cough**

- Vaccination is the best way to avoid whooping cough. The regular vaccination schedule includes a dose of vaccine at 2, 4 and 12 months of age and a booster dose between 4 and 6 years of age.
- Vaccination of pregnant women is also recommended on a regular schedule, ideally between 26 and 32 weeks of pregnancy, during each pregnancy. This helps protect the baby during its first few months of life. Employees who are pregnant are also encouraged to consult the recommendations received through the [For a Safe Maternity Experience](#) program, if they have not already done so.
- If a child's or a pregnant woman's vaccination is incomplete, an appointment to get vaccinated against whooping cough can be made on [Clic Santé](#). You can also make an appointment to get vaccinated against whooping cough by calling 1 877 644-4545 from Monday to Friday, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Maintain good [hand hygiene](#) habits in addition to coughing or sneezing into your elbow.

### **If a person has symptoms**

- They should maintain good hand hygiene habits and, if possible, wear a mask if they have a cough, sore throat or stuffy nose.
- Vulnerable people (pregnant women, babies under one year of age) who have been in contact with a case of whooping cough must contact Info-Santé by calling 811 or consult a doctor.
  - The doctor may recommend a diagnostic test and antibiotic therapy, if necessary.
  - If a woman in the third trimester of pregnancy or a child under one year of age has been in contact with a case of whooping cough, a preventive antibiotic may be prescribed to reduce the risk of complications.
- If whooping cough is diagnosed:

- Avoid contact with children under one year of age and pregnant women;
- Exclusion from primary (including kindergarten) and secondary schools is not required. However, it is recommended that the person:
  - Stay at home if they have a fever.
  - Wear a mask, if possible, if they have a cough, sore throat or stuffy nose. If an antibiotic is prescribed for whooping cough, wearing a mask no longer recommended 5 days after starting the antibiotic.

**For more information about whooping cough, please visit the following website:** <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/whooping-cough>

Please receive our best regards

The National Director of Public Health  
and Assistant Deputy Minister,

Luc Boileau

Our/Ref.: 24-SP-00460-004