

Date: December 15, 2017

To: All South Zone School Students & Families

From: Medical Officers of Health – South Zone

RE: Pertussis Outbreak Declared Over in South Zone; Immunization still critical.

As of December 13, 2017, Alberta Health Services (AHS) has declared the pertussis outbreak in South Zone over; however, it is still important that all communities continue to take steps to help reduce the spread of all illnesses, including illnesses that can be prevented through immunization.

During the pertussis outbreak alone, more than 388 cases of Pertussis were confirmed as part of the outbreak in South Zone. Although that one outbreak may be over, the risk to those who are unimmunized or under immunized is not.

Furthermore, influenza season is now active in Alberta. Without immunization, everyone is at risk for influenza, and it can be very serious. To protect yourself and loved ones from influenza, immunization is recommended for every Alberta over 6 months of age and is provided free of charge. For more information, including local influenza clinic schedules, visit www.ahs.ca/influenza or call Health Link at 811. Influenza immunization is also available through many pharmacists and physician offices around the province.

Pertussis immunization, and other routine immunizations, are available through local public health offices, year-round. If you or your family are not up-to-date on your immunizations - or you're unsure whether you are - please call local public office.

Public health also requests that people follow the below guidelines to prevent the spread of many illnesses in our schools and communities. These include:

- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing. If you don't have a tissue, always cough or sneeze into your arm, not into your hands.
- Washing hands thoroughly and often with soap and warm water or using hand sanitizer after coughing, sneezing, using tissues or the washroom, and before eating or preparing foods.
- Keeping hands and fingers away from your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Refraining from preparing food for anyone while you're sick.
- Staying home – from work, school, social obligations and visiting anyone in care facilities – when sick. For gastrointestinal illnesses (vomiting and diarrhea), this includes staying home until all symptoms have resolved for at least 48 hours.

This last point is particularly important as disregarding this advice from public health can put other people at risk and allow for the spread of disease, and even outbreaks, that can harm both



individuals and the community institutions we rely upon such as hospitals, daycares, schools and seniors facilities.

For more information on routine childhood immunizations, visit www.immunizealberta.ca. For information on influenza, visit www.ahs.ca/influenza.