

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Kasey Knutson, Public Information Officer, 509-962-7515

Kittitas County Public Health Pertussis Update

The Kittitas County Public Health Department (KCPHD) is thankful to Ellensburg High School for following the recent recommendations to address a confirmed case of pertussis associated with the high school wrestling team.

KCPHD made the following recommendations on our latest press release (full release found here [Kittitas County Press Releases](#)):

- All wrestlers at Ellensburg High School (male and female) along with associated staff should get tested for pertussis (PCR test).
- All practices, matches, and tournaments should stop until the return to practice date of 12.28.2024.

In response to these recommendations, we have received questions from the community asking why we are not handling this like COVID-19. Specifically, we have been asked why players are not allowed to test and return to their activities. We want to ensure an open dialogue and we will continue to answer questions from the public. This incident falls within our local jurisdiction, so we can be clear as to our decision process.

Decisions are made on a case by case basis, which always include different variables. Regarding the pertussis case, we considered the following:

- The date that the pertussis was reported to KCPHD. This gives us a timeframe to work with, so we can try to stop this from becoming an outbreak.
- Close contact. We know that wrestling is close contact sport. When people are closer there is a greater chance of spread.
- Holiday season and potential exposures. This time of year, people are in close contact with other family members and pertussis can spread rapidly.
- The potential dangers of pertussis to babies. Because newborn babies cannot get vaccinated for pertussis, it is especially dangerous.
- How pertussis specifically is spread. Pertussis is spread from person to person through the air when someone with pertussis coughs or sneezes. An individual with pertussis can be contagious two weeks or longer after coughing starts. Symptoms usually begin 7 to 10 days after exposure but can take up to 21 days for illness to begin.

We appreciate the community for helping us respond to this locally. We will continue to respond to questions and inquiries with outgoing information and will do our best to be open about local decisions.

For more information about pertussis, please visit DOH or the Centers for Disease Control or Prevention (CDC). For vaccinations and testing, please contact your local healthcare provider. For additional questions about this news release, please contact KCPHD at 509-962-7515.

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