Dear Parents/Guardians,

It has come to our attention that there has been an increased number of Mycoplasma Infections (walking pneumonia) diagnosed in our local elementary schools. Mycoplasma Pneumonia is common in school aged children. The Oak Park Department of Public Health would like to give you more information on what to look for and how to slow the spread.

If your student is experiencing the symptoms listed below we recommend you consult your child's physician.

As with all respiratory illness please follow the instructions of your school's health office. Do not send your child to school until their symptoms are resolving and they have been fever-free, without the use of medication, for a full 24hours.

For more information please feel free to contact the Oak Park Department of Public Health at 708-358-5480 or heatlh@oak-park.us

What is a mycoplasma infection?

Mycoplasma is a type of bacteria that can cause several different types of infection including chest colds and pneumonia (lung infections).

Symptoms

It can take 1 to 4 weeks for symptoms to appear after someone's been exposed to the bacteria. Symptoms can last for several weeks.

Some infected people may have no symptoms.

Symptoms depend on the type of infection.

Chest cold symptoms

Common symptoms include:

- Feeling tired
- Fever
- Headache
- Slowly worsening cough
- Sore throat

Younger children may have different symptoms
Instead of chest cold symptoms, children younger than 5 years old may have:

- Diarrhea
- Sneezing
- Sore throat
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Vomiting
- Watery eyes
- Wheezing

Pneumonia symptoms
Common symptoms include:

- Cough
- Feeling tired
- Fever and chills
- Shortness of breath

How is mycoplasma spread?

Mycoplasma is spread through contact with droplets from the nose and throat of infected people especially when they cough and sneeze. Transmission is thought to require prolonged close contact with an infected person. Spread in families, schools and institutions occurs slowly. The contagious period is probably fewer than 10 days and occasionally longer.

How is mycoplasma infection diagnosed?

Mycoplasma infection is usually diagnosed on the basis of typical symptoms and a chest x-ray. Blood tests or nasal swabs may be done.

What is the treatment for mycoplasma infection?

Antibiotics such as erythromycin, clarithromycin or azithromycin are effective treatment. However, because mycoplasma infection usually resolves on its own, antibiotic treatment of mild symptoms is not always necessary.

What can be done to prevent the spread of mycoplasma?

At this time, there are no vaccines for the prevention of mycoplasma infection and there are no reliably effective measures for control. As with any respiratory disease, all people should practice hand hygiene and cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.