

PERTUSSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH)



Pertussis, also called whooping cough, is a disease that is caused by a bacteria that attaches to the lining of the lungs. At first a person may feel like they have a cold with a runny nose, low-grade fever, and slight cough. After about a week, the person can start to have violent dry, coughing fits that can last a minute or longer. These fits can make it hard to breathe. Often during the coughing fits, a person needs to take a deep breath, which causes a “whooping” sound. Sometimes the coughing fits lead to vomiting. The disease is most serious in babies and can cause pneumonia (a lung infection). Half of babies who catch whooping cough go to the hospital and some even die.

How is it spread?



- ▶ Pertussis is caused by a bacteria that can easily be spread from person to person.
- ▶ Babies can catch pertussis from anyone around them (e.g., parents, siblings, grandparents, or babysitters) who spread the disease while holding or caring for the baby.
- ▶ The bacteria travels through the air on droplets of saliva. It can be spread by a sick person coughing or sneezing, or by spending time near an infected person.
- ▶ Infected people can spread pertussis up to three weeks after the cough begins if they are not treated with the appropriate antibiotics.

What are the signs and symptoms?



Early Symptoms

- ▶ Runny nose
- ▶ Occasional cough

Later Symptoms

- ▶ Fits of violent coughs that may be followed by a deep breath that makes a “whoop” sound or vomiting
- ▶ Coughing fits that make it difficult to breathe

How can pertussis be prevented?



The best way to prevent pertussis among babies, teens, and adults is to get vaccinated.

- ▶ Children need five doses of DTaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis) vaccine; the series is administered at ages 2, 4, 6, and 15 months, and a booster between 4 and 6 years of age.
- ▶ Teenagers should get the Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis) vaccine at age 11 or 12 years.
- ▶ Pregnant women should receive one dose of Tdap during each pregnancy, preferably during the early part of gestational weeks 27–36, regardless of prior history of receiving Tdap.
- ▶ Other adults should get at least one Tdap vaccine in their life.
- ▶ Keep babies and other high-risk people away from people who are sick with pertussis.
- ▶ *Talk with your health care professional about getting vaccinated against pertussis.*

For more information on the vaccine, please visit:

<http://www.immunize.org/vis/dtap.pdf> or www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/tdap.

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