

Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

What is Pertussis?

Pertussis is a contagious respiratory disease. Pertussis, often referred to as “whooping cough” affects everyone but can be dangerous and potentially deadly for babies less than a year old. A pertussis vaccine is available which helps prevent the likelihood of getting pertussis.

What are the signs and symptoms?

During the first two weeks, one may experience:

- Runny nose
- Low-grade fever
- Mild, occasional cough
- A pause in breathing in infants (apnea)

As the disease progresses, the most common symptoms of Pertussis appear and include:

- Paroxysms (fits) of many, rapid coughs followed by a high-pitched whoop
- Vomiting
- Tiredness from coughing fits

How does it spread?

Pertussis is spread from person to person by inhaling infected particles from the air. The bacteria are released into the air when an infected individual sneezes or coughs. Once a person breathes in the bacteria, the bacteria attach to the lining of the upper respiratory system.

How is it treated?

Antibiotics are typically used to treat pertussis. The sooner this occurs, the better. With treatment, the infection can be less severe especially if it was started earlier on. Treatment also helps reduce the spread of the disease to individuals who spend a lot of time with the infected person.

Prevention:

- The best method of prevention is to vaccinate children, teens, and adults against Pertussis. If you are made aware of an infected person, keep infants and other high-risk people away from the infected person.
- For children under 7 years of age, the DTap vaccine includes protection against Pertussis.
- For those 10 to 64 years of age, the booster, Tdap is available. This is a booster of the vaccine since most of the protection these adults had from a young age have reduced significantly.

For more information:

Visit the CDC here: [Pertussis - CDC Resource](#)



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This fact sheet is for information purposes and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care professional.