

# PERTUSSIS (WHOOPING COUGH)

## WHAT IS PERTUSSIS (WHOOPING COUGH)?

Pertussis is a contagious respiratory disease. Pertussis, "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.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

During the first two weeks, one may experience:

- Runny nose
- Low-grade fever
- A 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. The infection can be less severe with treatment, especially if it was started earlier. Treatment also helps reduce the spread of the disease to individuals who spend a lot of time with the infected person.

## PREVENTION

- The best prevention method 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. Tdap is a booster of the vaccine since most of the protection these adults had from a young age has been reduced significantly.

