

# PERTUSSIS WHOOPING COUGH



## WHAT IS PERTUSSIS?

Pertussis is a bacterial disease that causes uncontrollable coughing spells. The coughing spells can make it hard to breathe and may last several weeks. In babies less than 1 year old, a deep "whooping" is often heard when trying to breathe in. Infants are more likely to have severe disease, complications, require hospitalization, and possibly die from the illness. Infants often get the disease from a household member, such as a parent or sibling. It is highly contagious.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The first symptoms are like the common cold: runny nose, sneezing, cough. Coughing may become severe causing vomiting, loss of breath, and blueness on the face. This is more severe in infants. In infants, choking spells are common. Two weeks after symptoms start, the cough evolves into coughing spells. Pertussis should always be considered when vomiting occurs with coughing.

## HOW LONG DO SYMPTOMS LAST?

The coughing fits can go on for up to 10 weeks or more. Pertussis is known as the "100 day cough". Recovery from pertussis happens slowly. Coughing fits can return for many months.

## HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU HAVE PERTUSSIS?

If you suspect you have symptoms of pertussis, see a doctor. The doctor will run a test to see if it is pertussis. The testing must be done before antibiotic treatment can be started.

## HOW IS PERTUSSIS SPREAD?

When a person who has pertussis coughs or sneezes, tiny droplets containing the bacteria move through the air and spread the illness to other people. Or, a person may come in contact with secretions of an infected person. Pertussis is most infectious during the first 3 weeks a person has symptoms of illness.

## WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR PERTUSSIS?

If started early, antibiotics can make the symptoms of pertussis go away more quickly. However, if a person is diagnosed too late, antibiotics aren't as effective at decreasing symptoms. The antibiotics will help reduce spread of the disease to others. It is always important to take antibiotics as prescribed and finish ALL medications.

## HOW CAN PERTUSSIS BE PREVENTED?

Vaccination is the most effective method of preventing pertussis. The DTaP vaccination protects against pertussis. It is usually administered to pregnant people and children at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 12-15 months, and a booster at 4-6 years. The Tdap vaccination also protects against pertussis and should be given around age 11 or 12. Any person who interacts with infants should receive a Tdap booster every ten years, not matter what their age.

To protect the infant from contracting the disease.