

Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

What is Pertussis?

- Pertussis, or “whooping cough,” is a bad disease.
- When a sick person sneezes or coughs, tiny droplets move through the air, and it spreads from person to person.
- Pertussis can affect any person, but is worst for infants. Now that most children are immunized before they start school, most cases happen to teens and adults. It lasts about 6 weeks.
- Older children and adults often get better, but infants have a high risk of death, and should be watched at all times.

What are the Symptoms?

- The first signs of pertussis are like the common cold, and start one week after contact with the bacteria. Bad coughing starts 10 to 12 days later.
- In children, the coughing can end with a “whoop” noise, which happens when the person tries to breathe. Bad coughing may make a person throw up or pass out. Infants often choke.
- Other symptoms are runny nose, and light fever.
- The only way to know for sure if you have it is for your doctor to send a sample of your mucus to a lab.

How is it Treated?

- There are antibiotics for treating pertussis. It is important to take the medicine just as your doctor orders.
- Do not give cough medicines.



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How Can I Prevent It?

The best way to prevent pertussis is to **get the vaccine**.

- DTaP vaccine protects babies and children. It should be given at ages 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 15-18 months, and 4-6 years.
- The Tdap vaccine should be given around age 11 or 12, and every 10 years after that.
- Pregnant women should get a Tdap vaccine in their third trimester (27-36 weeks).
- Anyone who spends time with an infant should also get the Tdap shot.
- During a pertussis outbreak, children under age 7 who have not gotten the vaccine should not go to school or big events. They should also stay away from people who might have pertussis until 14 days after the last case.

Getting Help

Call your doctor if you, or your child, have signs of pertussis.

Call 9-1-1 or go to an ER if you, or your child, have problems breathing.

Sources:

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:** www.cdc.gov
- **"Pertussis" PubMed Health, U.S. National Library of Medicine:** www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

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