



Lenawee County
HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

PERTUSSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH) FACT SHEET

What is Pertussis?

Pertussis is a highly contagious bacterial respiratory disease. Pertussis is also known as “whooping cough” due to the “whoop” sound made when the infected person tries to breathe after hard coughing.

What are the symptoms?

EARLY SYMPTOMS

- Runny nose, low grade fever, mild occasional cough, apnea (a pause in breathing in babies)

LATER SYMPTOMS (After 1-2 weeks)

- Fits of many rapid coughs followed by “whoop.”
- Vomiting during or after coughing episodes.
- Exhaustion after coughing episodes.
- Vaccinated may not develop “whoop.”
- RECOVERY IS GRADUAL

Symptoms appear usually 5 to 10 days but up to 3 weeks after exposure . Typically lasts around 10 weeks.

How can it be prevented?

- There is a highly effective vaccine available. Ensure that anyone in contact with your baby is vaccinated
- Practice proper hand washing techniques using warm soap and water.
- Clean and disinfect infected surfaces.
- Avoid close contact with those who are sick.

How can it be spread?

- Through the air by droplets spread when coughing.
- Being in close proximity.
- Many people are carriers without realizing it. Most contagious at 2 weeks after cough begins.
- Very rare but may become infected even if vaccinated.

How it is treated?

- Generally treatment includes antibiotics and early detection is key. Early treatment may reduce severity of fits and infectivity to those in close contact. Treatment after 3 weeks is unlikely to help.
- Babies are at high risk for complications that can lead to death. Babies **WILL NOT** cough but will stop breathing and turn blue. **SEE A DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY**