

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
- Those who are vaccinated may not develop “whoop”
- RECOVERY IS GRADUAL

Symptoms usually appear 5 to 10 days but up to 3 weeks after exposure, and typically last 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
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- Practice proper hand washing techniques using warm soap and water
- Clean and disinfect infected surfaces

Avoid close contact with those who are sick

More Information: <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis>

How can it be spread?

- Through the air by droplets spread when coughing and sneezing
- Kissing, sharing food or eating utensils
- Being in close proximity to an infected person
- People can be carriers without realizing it
- Most contagious during the early symptom phase through the first two to three weeks after the fits of rapid coughing begins
- In rare instances, may become infected even if vaccinated

How is it treated?

- Generally treatment includes antibiotics. Early detection is key; early treatment may reduce severity of fits and infectivity to those in close contact.
- 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

