

PERTUSSIS (WHOOPING 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 may include:

- Runny nose, low grade fever, mild occasional cough, apnea (a pause in breathing in babies)
- Many babies with whooping cough don’t cough at all. Instead, they struggle to breathe and may turn blue (this is called cyanosis).

Later symptoms may include:

(1-2 weeks later)

- Fits of many rapid coughs followed by “whoop”
- Vomiting during or after coughing episodes
- Exhaustion after coughing episodes

RECOVERY IS GRADUAL.

Vaccinated people usually have milder symptoms and may not develop “whoop.”

Symptoms usually appear 5 to 10 days after exposure, but can take up to 3 weeks to develop. Symptoms typically last around 10 weeks.

How can it be prevented?

- GET VACCINATED! Ensure that anyone in contact with your baby is vaccinated.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a sleeve or tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Clean and disinfect infected surfaces.
- Avoid close contact with those who are sick.

How is it spread?

- By breathing the air in a room after an infected person coughs or sneezes
- By being in close proximity to an infected person
- By kissing or sharing food or eating utensils

People can be carriers without realizing it. Many babies are infected by older family members who don’t know they have it.

In rare instances, vaccinated people may become infected.

You are most contagious during the early symptom phase through the first two to three weeks after the fits of rapid coughing begins.

How is it treated?

- Treatment generally includes antibiotics. Early detection is key; early treatment may reduce severity of fits and can help prevent spreading it to others.

Babies are at high risk for complications that can lead to death. Many babies WILL NOT cough but will stop breathing and turn blue. SEE A DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY.

More Information: <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/index.html>

This FACT SHEET is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a healthcare provider. For more information call your healthcare provider.

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