

Protect your Family from Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

1. What is Pertussis?

Pertussis is a contagious disease that can spread when a person coughs or sneezes. It can cause serious illness, leading to hospital stays and even death. It's often seen in infants less than 6 months old.

2. What are the symptoms?

It starts with mild cold-like symptoms—runny or stuffy nose, watery eyes, sneezing, and dry cough. After a week or two, people start having sudden coughing attacks that are hard to stop. These coughing attacks can lead to vomiting, problems breathing, and feeling very tired. Children have a severe cough, often breathing with a loud “whooping” sound.

Many adults don't have the “whoop” sound. A loud cough may be an adult's only symptom. Infants often don't have a typical cough or “whoop” either. Many infants may have only congestion and a runny nose. Some may gasp or gag, be tired, vomit, have seizures, or stop breathing. Symptoms can get worse very quickly.

Your infant can have trouble drinking liquids or breathing, bluish skin, frequent vomiting or a fever that doesn't go away with over-the-counter medicines. Call your doctor right away, or go to the nearest emergency room. Babies can become very ill or die without warning.

3. What is the treatment?

Doctors may give antibiotics to treat the disease. Infants are often treated in a hospital because they're more likely to have serious health problems. It is important to treat pertussis early. If you think that you or your loved one may have it, contact your doctor right away.

4. How do you prevent it?

The best way to prevent it is to get a vaccine. The recommended vaccine for children is DTaP. This safe and effective vaccine protects against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis. For the best protection, children should get a DTaP vaccine at 2, 4, and 6 months; between 15-18 months of age; and at 4-6 years of age.

Pre-teens (11-12 years of age) and adults, including pregnant women in their third trimester, should get the Tdap booster shot because vaccine protection goes away over time. Parents and others who care for young infants should get a Tdap shot to protect themselves and the infant.



Related Health Problems:

For Infants

(mainly under 6 months of age)

- Ear infections
- Pneumonia
- Dehydration
- Seizures
- Brain damage
- Slow or stopped breathing

For Adults

- Hernias in the stomach
- Broken or damaged ribs
- Broken blood vessels of the skin or eyes

Prevention Tips:

- Get vaccinated
- Cover your cough and sneeze
- Wash your hands often
- Stay home if you're sick

If you don't have health insurance or a regular doctor, dial **2-1-1** for a list of low or no cost immunization clinics.

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