

Pertussis Questions & Answers

FOR PARENTS & GUARDIANS

What is pertussis?	<p>Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a respiratory infection caused by bacteria. It spreads easily and can be dangerous for babies and young children. A common symptom of pertussis is severe coughing fits, with a “whooping” sound when breathing in.</p>
How is pertussis spread?	<p>Pertussis is mainly spread through germs left in the air when a sick person coughs or sneezes. Close contact with a sick person, especially in crowded areas with low air flow, can increase the risk of getting sick.</p>
What are the typical symptoms of pertussis?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coughing fits (often followed by a “whoop” sound while breathing in)• Vomiting• Fatigue (exhaustion)• Mild fever
How long until signs and symptoms appear?	<p>Symptoms usually start 7-10 days after exposure to the bacteria, with a range of 4-21 days. People with pertussis are most contagious during the first two weeks after coughing begins.</p>
Who is at risk for pertussis?	<p>Pertussis can affect people of all ages, but certain groups have a higher risk of getting sick:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Infants younger than 6 months old, who are more vulnerable to severe illness and complications• Pregnant women, especially those in the third trimester, and their newborns• People with compromised immune systems• Those who have not been vaccinated fully or at all

For more information on pertussis, visit:

- About Whooping Cough (CDC): www.cdc.gov/pertussis/about
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough): www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/catg.d/p4212.pdf
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough): health.hawaii.gov/docd/disease_listing/pertussis/

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How is pertussis diagnosed?	Diagnosis of pertussis is primarily based on whether or not a person has symptoms and is confirmed through laboratory testing.
What is the treatment for pertussis?	Pertussis can be treated with antibiotics (medicines that kill bacteria or make it hard for them to grow). Post-exposure prophylaxis and vaccination are also important for treatment and prevention. Ask your doctor for more information.
Are the pertussis vaccines effective?	Yes, pertussis vaccines do a good job of preventing sickness. Vaccines can also make symptoms less severe if sickness occurs. However, vaccine strength may lower over time, and it's important to get a booster shot for continued protection.
What should I do if I suspect that I or someone else has pertussis?	If you think you or someone else has pertussis, see your doctor immediately. Book a visit with your doctor for testing and treatment. Follow your doctor's recommendations, wear a mask, and cover your cough/sneeze with a tissue to help stop the spread.
How can pertussis be prevented?	<p>Pertussis prevention depends on a combination of vaccination, maintaining good respiratory hygiene, and seeking immediate care for symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Routine childhood vaccination with the DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis) vaccine.• Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis) booster vaccination for adolescents and adults, including pregnant women.• If you test positive for pertussis, avoid close contact with others for 21 days if you have not received treatment, or for 5 days if you have received treatment.• Practicing respiratory hygiene, including covering coughs and sneezes with tissues, and frequent handwashing.• Sanitizing high-touched surfaces.