

Pertussis “Whooping cough” Information

Symptoms

- Whooping cough is known for the "whoop" noise when someone gasps for air after a coughing fit.
- Appears like a common cold
 - Whooping cough appears similar to a common cold early on. Healthcare providers often don't suspect or diagnose it until more severe symptoms appear.
- **Early symptoms** can last for 1 to 2 weeks and usually include:
 - Runny nose or stuffed-up nose
 - Low-grade fever (less than 100.4°F)
 - Mild, occasional cough
- **Later symptoms**
 - **Rapid, violent, and uncontrolled coughing fits**
 - One to two weeks after the first symptoms start, people may develop coughing fits. These coughing fits usually last 1 to 6 weeks, but can last for up to 10 weeks. The cough generally gets worse and becomes more common as the illness continues.
 - Coughing fits can cause people to
 - Make a high-pitched “whoop” when they inhale after a coughing fit
 - Vomit during or after coughing fits
 - Feel very tired after the fit, but usually seem well in-between fits
 - Have difficulty sleeping at night
 - Struggle to breathe

Testing and diagnosis

Whooping cough can be difficult to diagnose because the signs and symptoms are often similar to other respiratory illnesses. It can be helpful to know if you've been in contact with someone who has whooping cough.

Healthcare providers can diagnose whooping cough by doing a

- History of typical signs and symptoms
- Physical exam
- Laboratory test of a mucus sample from the back of the throat

How it spreads

- The bacteria that cause whooping cough spread easily from **person to person** through the air. When a person with whooping cough sneezes or coughs, they release small particles with the bacteria in them. Other people can then breathe in the bacteria.
- These bacteria can spread when people spend a lot of time together or share breathing space.

Good hygiene

- CDC recommends practicing good hygiene to help prevent the spread of bacteria and viruses that can cause many respiratory illnesses.

Treatment

Antibiotics

Preventive antibiotics are also known as postexposure antimicrobial prophylaxis (PEP). These are medicines given to someone who has been exposed to harmful bacteria to help **prevent them from getting sick**.


Some people should receive antibiotics to prevent them from getting sick if they have been around someone with whooping cough.

If you've been exposed to someone with whooping cough, talk to a healthcare provider about preventive antibiotics. A healthcare provider or health department generally decides who should get preventive antibiotics.

Prevention

- CDC recommends whooping cough (pertussis) vaccination for everyone.
- Whooping cough vaccines are the best way to protect against whooping cough.
- These vaccines work well, but protection fades over time.
- Talk to a vaccine provider if you have questions about whooping cough vaccines.

People of all ages need WHOOPING COUGH VACCINES



| DTaP for young children | Tdap for preteens | Tdap for pregnant women | Tdap for adults |
|---|-----------------------|---|--|
| ✓ 2, 4, and 6 months ✓ 15 through 18 months ✓ 4 through 6 years | ✓ 11 through 12 years | ✓ During the 27-36th week of each pregnancy | ✓ Anytime for those who have never received it |

www.cdc.gov/whoopingcough 