



PERTUSSIS FACT SHEET

What is pertussis?

Pertussis (or whooping cough) is a disease caused by infection of the throat with the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*.

What are the symptoms?

Pertussis usually begins just like a cold, with a runny nose, tiredness and sometimes a mild fever.

Coughing then develops, usually in bouts, followed by a deep gasp (or "whoop"). Sometimes people vomit after coughing.

Pertussis can be very serious in small children. They might go blue or stop breathing during coughing attacks and may need to go to the hospital.

Older children and adults may have a less serious illness, with bouts of coughing that continue for many weeks regardless of treatment.

How is it spread?

Pertussis is spread to other people by droplets from coughing or sneezing. Untreated, a person with pertussis can spread it to other people for up to three weeks after onset of cough.

The time between exposure and getting sick is usually seven to ten days, but can be up to three weeks.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get pertussis.

People living in the same household as someone with pertussis are more likely to catch it.

Immunisation greatly reduces your risk of infection, but reinfection can occur.

How is it prevented?

Immunise your child on time

The vaccine does not give lifelong protection against pertussis, and protection is sometimes incomplete.

Children need to be immunised at two, four and six months.

Boosters are needed at four years of age and again at 11-12 years of age.

Keep your baby away from people who cough

Babies need two or three vaccinations before they are protected. For this reason, it is very important to keep people with coughing illnesses away from your baby so they don't pass on pertussis or other germs.

Get immunised if you are an adult in close contact with small children

A vaccine for adults is available.

It is recommended for all adults and especially for adults who are health care providers and those taking care of infants

If you are a close contact of someone with pertussis:

Watch out for the symptoms. If symptoms develop, see your doctor.

Some close contacts are at high risk (e.g., children under one year, children not fully vaccinated)

If you have pertussis:

Get treated early while infectious, avoid other people and stay away from young children, e.g., at child care centres, pre-school and school.

How is it diagnosed?

If a doctor thinks someone has pertussis, a swab from the back of the nose,

How is it treated?

A special antibiotic - usually either azithromycin, erythromycin or clarithromycin is used to treat pertussis. These antibiotics can prevent the spread of the germ to other people.

Coughing often continues for many weeks despite treatment.

What is the public health response?

Doctors and laboratories must notify cases of pertussis to the Local Public Health Department.

Infectious children are restricted from going to pre-school and school. Unimmunised contacts may be excluded from child-care unless they take the special antibiotics

Where can I get more information about pertussis?

For more information you can go to <http://www.cdc.gov>

You may also call the Disease Control Section of Wayne County Department of Public Health at 734-727-7078