



Pertussis Facts

What is pertussis?

- "Whooping cough" or the cough of 100 days.
- A highly contagious disease involving the mouth, nose and throat of an infected person.

Who gets pertussis?

- People of all ages can get pertussis.
- Most cases occur in children under age 5 years, however, there have been more cases occurring in teens and adults.

How is pertussis spread?

- Primarily by direct contact with discharges from the nose and throat of infected persons or by contact with airborne droplets of respiratory secretions (via coughing or sneezing.)
- Frequently, older siblings, parents or grandparents may carry the bacteria in their nose and throat and transmit the disease to others in their household.

What are the symptoms of pertussis?

- Begins as a mild upper respiratory infection, like a common cold, including sneezing, runny nose, low-grade fever and a mild cough.
- Within two weeks, the cough becomes more severe and is characterized by episodes of numerous rapid coughs followed by a crowing or high pitched whoop.
- A thick, clear mucous may be discharged.
- The coughing episodes are more frequent at night.
- Adults and immunized children generally have milder symptoms.

How soon after infections do symptoms appear?

- Usually 5 to 10 days but may be as long as 21 days.

When and for how long is a person able to spread pertussis?

- A person can transmit pertussis from 7 days following exposure to 3 weeks after the onset of coughing episodes.
- A person is no longer considered infectious after completing a 5 day course of antibiotics.

Is there a vaccine for pertussis?

- Yes, for children under age 7 years, there is a combination vaccine called "DTaP" which contains diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. It is routinely given at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 12-15 months and between 4-6 years of age.
- Adolescents and adults should receive one dose of "Tdap" which contains diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. "Tdap" vaccine, available since 2005, is recommended as one time booster to previously received tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis vaccinations.

What can be done to prevent the spread of pertussis?

- Single most effective control measure is maintaining the highest possible level of immunization in the community.

- Persons with pertussis should stay away from others, especially infants and young children, until completion of 5 days of antibiotics.
- Treatment of people who are close contacts of pertussis cases is also an important part of prevention.

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Additional Information: [U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention](#) (CDC)

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