



PERTUSSIS FACT SHEET FOR PARENTS

Some cases of pertussis have been reported from your child's school or classroom. Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a very serious respiratory infection. It can cause violent coughing fits. Pertussis is most harmful for young babies and can be deadly.

HOW DOES PERTUSSIS SPREAD?

The bacterium that causes pertussis is found in the nose and throat of infected people. These bacteria spread through the air in droplets produced when an infected person sneezes and/or coughs. Persons in the early stage of illness are the most contagious.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms usually appear 4 to 21 days after exposure to someone with the illness. The symptoms of pertussis occur in three stages.

1. The first begins like a cold, with a runny nose, sneezing, mild fever, and cough.
2. The second includes uncontrolled coughing or coughing spasms followed by a whooping noise when the person breathes in air. This stage may last several weeks.
3. The third is where the cough slowly begins to disappear. This stage may last for several weeks.

HOW TO PREVENT PERTUSSIS?

The following recommendations are prevention measures for your child and family to reduce the risks of serious illness from pertussis.

1. If you are a household member or have high-risk close contact with a person who has pertussis, take the proper preventive antibiotics.
2. Keep up to date on vaccinations. The pertussis-containing vaccine is given at 2, 4, 6, and 12-18 months of age and when a child enters school. Persons 11-18 years of age should receive a single booster dose of pertussis vaccine, preferably at 11-12 years of age. All adults should have a Tdap booster if they haven't had one.
3. Pregnant women need Tdap at each pregnancy.
4. Keep infants away from people who are sick. Cover your cough and wash your hands frequently if you are coughing or sneezing. See a health care provider immediately if you develop symptoms.

RESOURCES

[cdc.gov/pertussis](https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis)

[cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/pertussis](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/pertussis)