

# Protect your Family from Whooping Cough

## What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough (also known as pertussis) is a contagious disease that can be spread when a person coughs or sneezes. It can cause serious illness, especially in infants under 6 months of age, leading to hospitalization and even death.

## What are the signs and symptoms of whooping cough?

Whooping cough starts off with mild cold-like symptoms—runny or stuffy nose, watery eyes, sneezing, and dry cough. After a week or two, sudden uncontrollable attacks of coughing begin and can lead to vomiting, problems breathing, and extreme tiredness. Children cough violently, often breathing with a loud “whooping” sound. Many adults don’t have the “whoop” sound, and a constant hacking cough may be their only symptom. Infants often don’t have a typical cough or “whoop” either. Many infants appear to have only congestion and a runny nose. Some may gasp or gag, get very tired, vomit, have seizures, or stop breathing. Symptoms can get worse very quickly. If your infant has trouble drinking liquids or breathing, bluish skin, frequent vomiting and/or a fever that doesn’t go away with over-the-counter medications, call your doctor right away, or take him/her to the nearest emergency room. Babies can become seriously ill or die without warning.

## How is whooping cough treated?

Whooping cough is caused by a bacteria, so doctors may give antibiotics to treat the disease. Infants are typically treated in a hospital because they’re more likely to have serious complications.

It is important to treat whooping cough early. If you think that you or your loved one may have whooping cough, contact your doctor right away.



## Complications

### For Infants

(especially under 6 months of age)

- Ear infections
- Pneumonia
- Dehydration
- Seizures
- Brain damage
- Slow or stopped breathing

### For Adults

- Abdominal hernias
- Broken or cracked ribs
- Broken blood vessels of the skin or eyes

## Prevention Tips

- Get vaccinated.
- Cover your cough and sneeze.
- Wash your hands often.
- Stay home if you’re sick.

## How do you prevent whooping cough?

The best way to prevent whooping cough is to get vaccinated. The recommended vaccine for children is called **DTaP**. This safe and effective vaccine protects against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis.

For the best protection, children should receive a DTaP vaccine at 2, 4, and 6 months; between 15-18 months of age; and at 4-6 years of age.

Pre-teens (11-12 years of age) and adults should get the booster shot called **Tdap** because vaccine protection fades over time. Parents and others who care for young infants should get a Tdap shot to protect themselves and the infant.

*If you don't have health insurance or a regular doctor, dial 2-1-1 for a list of low-cost immunization clinics.*

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