

Pertussis (whooping cough)

What is it?

- Pertussis is a highly contagious bacterial infection that causes coughing and gagging with little or no fever. While breathing in a “whoop” sound is often heard.
- Periods of coughing can lead to choking or vomiting.
- Symptoms appear between 7 to 20 days (average 7 to 10) after being infected.
- Usually starts with a runny nose, mild fever, red watery eyes and cough, then followed by severe coughing that can last 1 to 2 months.
- A child can turn red from the effort of coughing or blue from poor breathing.
- The person may look and feel healthy between coughing episodes.
- Immunized school children, adolescents and adults have milder symptoms than young children.

How is it spread?

- Pertussis is spread through droplets from the mouth and nose when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
- It is also spread by direct contact with secretions from the nose or throat of an infected person.
- Persons treated with antibiotics are contagious until the first 5 days of antibiotics have been completed.
- Unimmunized or inadequately immunized people are at a higher risk for severe illness.
- Immunization by giving the pertussis vaccine is used to protect young infants from severe illness and death
- Immunized adults and older children can get pertussis because protection lasts only 5 to 10 years after the last vaccine.

Is there treatment for it?

- Antibiotics.
- Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration (loss of fluids).

What can be done to prevent the spread of it?

- A pertussis vaccine is available. This is given by needle.
- Stay home if you have pertussis and avoid contact with others until 5 days of antibiotics have been completed.
- Contact your health care provider, if you live or have close contact with someone who has pertussis. You may need antibiotics to prevent pertussis.
- Avoid contact with infants and pregnant women if you have a cough illness. This includes visiting or working in child care settings or areas of a health care facility where contact with infants or pregnant women is likely.
- Avoid having children share any food, toys, or other objects that may be contaminated with secretions from the mouth or nose.

For more information

Public Health Agency of Canada

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im/vpd-mev/pertussis-eng.php>

**Stop the spread of germs and infection.
Clean your hands.**

