

Pertussis

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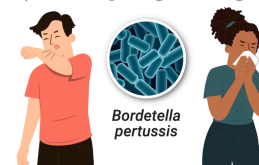
Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*. Pertussis has been in the news lately due to the large increase in reported cases in 2024. Six times more cases of Pertussis have been reported in 2024 compared to 2023. The bacteria are spread through the air via respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The disease is most contagious during the early stages, before symptoms become severe. Pertussis can be transmitted to people of all ages, but it is most serious in infants and young children, who are at risk of severe illness and death.

Pertussis typically begins with cold-like symptoms such as a runny nose, low-grade fever, and a mild cough which can last for 1-2 weeks. After this, the coughing can become more severe and can include episodes of rapid coughing followed by a high-pitched "whoop" sound as the person tries to inhale. These coughing fits can be so severe that they cause vomiting and difficulty breathing.

Sometimes infants with pertussis can be difficult to diagnose. Infants can be

infected with pertussis without having a cough but rather have only atypical symptoms such as apnea, seizures, or cyanosis (a bluish-purple hue to the skin, occurring on the face and surrounding the mouth). The best way to prevent pertussis is through vaccination. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all children and adults receive the pertussis vaccine as part of their routine immunization schedule. Additionally, up to date pertussis vaccination in adults and family members of infants help to reduce the risk of pertussis exposure to infants.

Pertussis (Whooping Cough)



- 1 **Catarrhal phase** (lasts 1–2 weeks)
 - Mild fever, cough, rhinorrhea
 - Conjunctival injection
 - Excessive lacrimation
- 2 **Paroxysmal phase** (lasts 2–6 weeks)
 - Begins during second week of illness
 - Paroxysmal cough (whooping cough)
 - Inspiratory stridor
- 3 **Convalescent phase** (lasts 1–2 weeks)
 - Gradual reduction in symptoms

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a series of pertussis vaccines, known as the DTaP vaccine for children, and Tdap vaccine for teens and adults. The CDC recommends that children should receive five doses of the DTaP vaccine starting at 2 months of age.

Sources: Accessed December 14, 2024

Pertussis infection in infants and children: clinical features and diagnosis. UpToDate. <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/pertussis-infection-in-infants-and-children-clinical-features-and-diagnosis>. Accessed Dec 14, 2024.
 Pertussis (Whooping Cough). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/index.html>. Accessed Dec 14, 2024.