

VACCINES

Build your child's health

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Is it just a cough?

Or is it Pertussis
(whooping cough)?

VACCINATE AT 2, 4, 6, AND 15-18 MONTHS

What is pertussis?

Pertussis (also called whooping cough) is a disease caused by the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis* that spreads from person-to-person with close contact. Anyone of any age can get pertussis. However, the disease is much more serious in infants.



What are the symptoms?

- Cold-like in the beginning; runny nose, sneezing, mild fever, and cough.
- After one to two weeks, the cough gets worse and usually starts to turn into strong coughing fits. This may last six or more weeks. Fever, if present, is usually mild.
- In young children, coughing fits are often followed by a whooping sound as they try to catch their breath.
- After coughing, a person may have a hard time catching their breath, vomit, or become blue in the face from lack of air. The coughing spells may be so bad that it is hard for babies to eat, drink, or breathe.
- The cough is often worse at night, and cough medicines usually do not help.
- Between coughing spells, the person often appears to be well.
- Some babies may only have apnea (failure to breathe) and can die from this.
- Adults, teens, and vaccinated children often have milder symptoms that mimic bronchitis or asthma.

How is pertussis spread?

- An infected person sneezes or coughs and other people nearby can then breathe in the bacteria.
- The first symptoms usually appear 5 to 21 days after a person is infected.

Who gets pertussis (whooping cough)?

Anyone can get pertussis. It is most serious for babies and can lead to death. Babies often get pertussis from older children or adults whose symptoms are milder.

Is pertussis dangerous?

It can be, especially for infants.

Pertussis can cause:

- Pneumonia
- Apnea (episodes of stopped breathing)
- Seizures (jerking and staring spells)
- Encephalitis (swelling of the brain)
- Brain damage
- Hospitalization (Most hospitalizations and deaths from pertussis occur in infants less than 3 months of age).
- Death (rarely in adults but common in infants not yet vaccinated). Pertussis causes about 10 to 20 deaths each year in the United States.

The first symptoms usually appear within 5 days to 21 days after a person is infected.

How is pertussis diagnosed?

- A doctor can tell if you have pertussis from symptoms.
- To confirm the diagnosis the doctor can test a sample of mucus taken from the back of the nose.

It is important to remember that lab tests may be negative, even if a patient has pertussis.



PERTUSSIS CAN BE DANGEROUS

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Can pertussis be prevented?

**Yes. Vaccinate all children on time.
This is the best way to prevent pertussis.**

Also, everyone should:

- Avoid close contact with others who are coughing or otherwise ill.
- Keep babies away from coughing people of any age.
- Wash their hands often.
- Stay at home if ill.
- Cover their mouth when they cough.
- Get medical attention if they develop pertussis-like symptoms or have been exposed to someone with pertussis.
- Talk to their health-care provider to be sure you and your family have been vaccinated.

Is there a vaccine for pertussis?

Yes. There are vaccines available (DTaP and Tdap) to prevent pertussis. Both vaccines are given in combination with tetanus and diphtheria. Your age determines which vaccine you should get.

- DTaP is recommended for children up to 7 years of age. Children should get a dose of DTaP at 2, 4, 6, 15-18 months of age, and at 4-6 years of age for a total of five doses.

Is pertussis vaccine safe?

- Tdap is approved for use in adolescents and adults 10 through 64 years of age. Persons in this age group should receive a single booster dose of Tdap vaccine in place of a single dose of Td. Ask your doctor or clinic if Tdap is right for you.

Is pertussis vaccine safe?

- Yes, it is safe.
- A vaccine, like any medicine, can cause serious side effects, such as a severe allergic reaction. However, the risk of any vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely low.
- The most common side effects are minor. These include soreness, redness or swelling where the injection was given, and a low fever.
- Although there is a very small risk of problems caused by the vaccine, the risk from getting the disease is much more serious.

Where can you get more information? Call your doctor, nurse, local health department, or the Texas Department of State Health Services, Immunization Branch, at (800) 252-9152. Or visit our website at www.ImmunizeTexas.com