

Things Parents Can Do

- » Check your child's immunization record to see if they have been immunized against whooping cough.
- » Watch your child for signs of whooping cough. The vaccine does not prevent the disease in all children. If the child is immunized and still gets the disease, it will be a much milder form.
- » If your child has whooping cough, he or she should not return to school or the child care facility until the antibiotic *has been taken for at least five days*. If no treatment is taken, your child must be excluded for three weeks from school and daycare.

Whooping cough is most serious for children who have not completed their primary immunizations. Children in the first year of life are most at risk for serious illness and possible complications due to whooping cough. The risk of Whooping cough in infants is much greater than the risks from the vaccine.



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Whooping Cough (Pertussis)



What is it?

Whooping cough is an infection caused by bacteria.

The infection usually starts with a runny nose and an irritating cough. Soon the cough becomes more frequent and severe.

The person will experience coughing spasms in which they may not be able to catch their breath.

After the coughing spasm ends, the person may cough up clear thick mucus, or may even vomit. The cough may last for 6 to 10 weeks.

THERE IS A WHOOPING COUGH VACCINE FOR BOTH CHILDREN AND ADULTS. ASK YOUR PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE!

How can I be infected?

Whooping cough is spread through the air when the infected person coughs, or by direct contact with the mucous discharge from the infected person.

Those in close contact with the infected person (usually in the same house) are most at risk of becoming infected.

Whooping cough is usually spread in the early stage of infection (running nose and cough), but a person can remain infectious for about 3 weeks.

Those in contact with an infected person usually come down with whooping cough in about 7 to 10 days following their exposure to the disease.



What Can I Do?

If you have contact with a person who has whooping cough, watch for symptoms of runny nose and a severe cough. If these develop, see your doctor.

If you have the symptoms or test positive for the bacteria (a swab is taken from your nose/throat), you will be given an antibiotic (Erythromycin for 10 days). You will need to stay home until you have been on the antibiotic for 5 days.

Close contacts who have been exposed to the disease may need to take the antibiotic to control the further spread of the disease.

Whooping cough can be controlled by immunization.