



# Whooping Cough

(Pertussis)

## What is whooping cough?

- Whooping cough is a very serious respiratory illness.
- It is caused by *Bordetella pertussis* bacteria.
- It can cause violent coughing fits.
- Whooping cough is most harmful for young babies and can be deadly.

## What are the symptoms of whooping cough?

- Runny nose
- Low-grade fever (less than 100.4 degrees)
- Mild cough (babies do not do this)
- Apnea (life-threatening pause in breathing in babies) and cyanosis (turning blue or purple) in babies and young children

These are early symptoms and can progress. Children and babies may then develop more serious problems:

- Coughing very hard, over and over. These coughing fits happen more at night.
- Gasping for breath after a coughing fit. They may make a “whooping” sound. **Babies may not cough or make this sound—they may gag, gasp, or stop breathing.**
- Difficulty breathing, eating, drinking, or sleeping
- Turning blue from lack of oxygen
- Vomiting after coughing fits

Coughing fits can last for up to 10 weeks or more, and may happen again next time the child is sick.

## Is whooping cough serious?

Whooping cough is most dangerous for babies and young children. Babies younger than 1 year old who have whooping cough may:

- Need to be cared for in the hospital
- Develop pneumonia (a serious lung infection)
- Have seizures
- Suffer brain damage

- Whooping cough can even be deadly. About 1 in 2 deaths from whooping cough are among babies younger than 2 months old. These babies are too young to get whooping cough shots.

## How does whooping cough spread?

- The bacteria that cause whooping cough spread easily through the air when a person who has whooping cough breathes, coughs, or sneezes.
- Almost everyone who is not immune to whooping cough will get sick if exposed to it.
- A person can spread the disease from the very start of the sickness (which may begin as cold-like symptoms) and for at least 2 weeks after coughing starts.
- Since symptoms can be mild for some people, a baby can catch whooping cough from adults, grandparents, or older brothers or sisters who don't know they have the disease.

## Do people still get whooping cough in the United States?

- Before the whooping cough vaccines were recommended for all infants, about 8,000 people in the United States died each year from whooping cough.
- Today, because of the vaccine, this number has dropped to fewer than 20 per year, but cases have been increasing and outbreaks of whooping cough can occur.

## When should my child get a whooping cough shot?

There are 2 vaccines that help protect children against whooping cough (also called pertussis): DTaP and Tdap. Both also protect against diphtheria and tetanus. These shots do not offer lifetime protection.

**People of all ages need WHOOPING COUGH VACCINES**



<b>DTaP</b> for young children	<b>Tdap</b> for preteens	<b>Tdap</b> for pregnant women	<b>Tdap</b> for adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 2, 4, and 6 months</li> <li>✓ 15 through 18 months</li> <li>✓ 4 through 6 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 11 through 12 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ During the 27-36th week of each pregnancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Anytime for those who have never received it</li> </ul>
<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/whoopingcough">www.cdc.gov/whoopingcough</a> 			

The first three doses of the DTaP vaccine help children develop primary immunity. Booster doses of DTaP for older children and adults help strengthen the immune system's memory.

Whooping cough shots are safe and effective at preventing whooping cough. Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. These are usually mild and go away on their own.

From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/diseases/pertussis.html>

