

PERTUSSIS

WHAT IS PERTUSSIS?

Pertussis, which is also known as *whooping cough*, is a disease that is caused by bacteria. Pertussis is spread from person-to-person when an infected person sneezes or coughs. Pertussis is very contagious, especially among children. Although Pertussis is most common among infants, any person can get it, no matter how old they are.

TREATMENT

Antibiotics are used to treat people who have Pertussis. Antibiotics are also given to people who have close contact with the infected person, regardless of age or vaccination status. It is recommended that the infected person gets plenty of rest and drinks plenty of fluids. Those suffering from severe cases of Pertussis usually are hospitalized and receive special treatments to relieve the coughing.



SYMPTOMS

People do not experience any symptoms until 4 to 10 days after a person is infected, but it may be as long as 21 days. The first symptoms of Pertussis can be mistaken for the common cold. These symptoms include a runny nose, mild fever, cough, and sneezing. After the first or second week, the cough worsens and the person begins having coughing fits. The coughing fits consist of long, loud coughs. In young children, the fits are followed by a whooping sound. Sometimes, a person may vomit or have difficulty breathing after a coughing fit. Some people, especially babies, may even have difficulty eating and drinking. The coughing may last for six or more weeks and is usually worse at night.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How can I prevent myself from getting Pertussis?**
There are two vaccines for Pertussis. DTaP is given to children 7 years old and younger. For adolescents and adults, Tdap is given. Both are given in combination with the vaccines for Diphtheria and Tetanus.
- **I was immunized as a baby, is it still good?**
Protection provided by the pertussis vaccine may fade as we get older. Adolescents and adults should receive the Tdap vaccine.
- **I did not receive the vaccine for Pertussis as a child, can I get vaccinated now?**
Adolescents and adults who have never received the DTaP vaccine may receive the Tdap vaccine.
- **Can I die from Pertussis?**
Yes, Pertussis may be fatal; especially in infants. Other complications include middle ear infection, pneumonia, loss of appetite, and seizures.
- **Who do I call if I think I have Pertussis?**
Contact your physician. Your physician will be able to perform laboratory testing to determine whether or not you have Pertussis.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Department of State Health Services
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
<http://www.cdc.gov>