



## **PERTUSSIS (Whooping Cough)**

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### **WHAT IS PERTUSSIS?**

Pertussis is a disease of the lungs and throat caused by bacteria. The bacteria can be found in the nose, mouth and throat of an infected person.

### **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF PERTUSSIS?**

Pertussis starts like a cold with sneezing, runny nose, low-grade fever and mild cough. Over the next week or two, the cough gets worse leading to serious coughing spells that often (but not always) end with a “whoop”. The coughing may be so bad that it makes the person gag or throw up. Sometimes thick clear mucus is spat out. This cough can last up to a month or two and happens more at night.

### **HOW IS PERTUSSIS SPREAD?**

Pertussis is spread by a person who has pertussis by coughing or sneezing the germ into the air, where other people can breathe it in.

### **WHO CAN GET PERTUSSIS?**

Anyone at any age can get pertussis. Young children who have not been immunized get sicker than older children and adults.

### **CAN PERTUSSIS INFECTION BE TREATED?**

The person with pertussis is usually given antibiotics.

### **HOW CAN PERTUSSIS BE PREVENTED?**

The best way to protect against pertussis is to be immunized. Pertussis immunization is part of the routine childhood immunizations, given at two, four, six and 18 months of age, at four to six years of age and 14 to 16 years of age. Persons wishing to be vaccinated but who are not eligible for publicly-funded vaccine should consult their family physician.

People who have been in close contact with someone who has pertussis may be given antibiotics. If you have been in contact with someone who has pertussis, you should consult your family doctor.

A person with pertussis should be excluded from school, daycare, workplace or other settings with susceptible individuals.

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**For additional information, contact your regional Public Health office or your family doctor.  
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