



Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

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5 Things to Know About Whooping Cough

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a highly contagious disease that can be very serious, especially for babies.

Keeping up to date with whooping cough vaccines is the best way to protect you and your loved ones.

1 Whooping cough can be very serious, especially for babies.

- Whooping cough can cause serious illness in people of all ages and can even be life threatening, especially in babies.
- About one third of babies younger than 1 year old who get whooping cough need care in the hospital, and 1 out of 100 babies who get treatment in the hospital die.

Learn about [whooping cough complications](#).

2 Whooping cough is very contagious.

- The bacteria that cause whooping cough spread easily from person to person through coughing and sneezing.
- Some people have mild symptoms and don't know they have whooping cough, but they can still spread the bacteria that cause it to others, including babies.

Learn more about the [spread of whooping cough](#).

3 Severe coughing fits can last for weeks.

- Pertussis is known as “whooping cough” because of the “whooping” sound that people can make when gasping for air after a fit of coughing.
- Whooping cough can cause rapid, violent, and uncontrolled coughing fits until all air is gone from the lungs. These coughing fits can go on for up to 10 weeks or more.

Learn about [whooping cough symptoms](#).

4 Babies may not cough at all.

- Babies may not cough at all. Instead, they may have apnea (life-threatening pauses in breathing) or struggle to breathe.
- Any time someone is struggling to breathe, it is important to get them to a doctor right away.

5 Vaccines are the best protection against whooping cough.

- The best way to protect you and your loved ones is to stay up to date with recommended whooping cough vaccines.
- Two vaccines in the United States help prevent whooping cough: DTaP and Tdap. Children younger than 7 years old get DTaP, while older children, teens, and adults get Tdap.

- Women should get a Tdap vaccine during the third trimester of **each pregnancy** to help protect their baby early in life.

Learn about [CDC's whooping cough vaccination recommendations](#).

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