



Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

What is pertussis?

Pertussis, also called Whooping Cough, is a highly contagious bacterial infection that causes a strong cough lasting several weeks or even months.

How is pertussis spread?

Pertussis is spread from person to person. People with pertussis usually spread the disease to another person by coughing or sneezing.

What symptoms should I watch for?

Pertussis usually starts with mild cold-like symptoms including sneezing, runny nose, slight fever, and a mild cough. After fits of many coughs, someone with pertussis often needs to take deep breaths which result in a "whooping" sound.

Symptoms can last from six to ten weeks, or longer and are worse at night. The symptoms of pertussis can start about six to 20 days after being in contact with someone with pertussis.

Pertussis can affect people of all ages, but can be very serious, even deadly, for babies less than a year old.

What is the treatment for pertussis?

Antibiotics may not make you feel better, but they may help reduce how infectious you are to other people.

People who have pertussis should stay away from young children and babies until treatment is completed.

How do I know if I have pertussis?

It is important that you see your health care provider if you think you have pertussis. When making an appointment, let your health care provider's office know that you may have pertussis so they can take special care to prevent spreading it to other people.

Your health care provider can test for pertussis by having a swab taken from the area at the back of your nose.

How do I protect myself and others?

The best way to prevent pertussis is to make sure you are up to date with all your vaccinations. If you do not have a health care provider, call the Vaccine Preventable Disease Team at (705) 721-7520 ext. 8806.

You can further help stop the spread of pertussis by washing your hands after coughing or sneezing, before preparing foods and before eating. If you do cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth. Do not share cigarettes or drink from the same glass, water bottle or straw as others.

Is there anything special I need to know about pertussis?

Having the disease does not guarantee that you will not get the disease again.

An infected person with pertussis can return to child care, school or other settings once they have received five days of an appropriate antibiotic or after 21 days from the beginning of the cough.

If you had contact with someone that has confirmed Pertussis, watch for signs and symptoms for 21 days from your last contact with the person. If you develop symptoms, contact your health care provider.

Call the Communicable Disease Team: ext. 8809