



# Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

[Pertussis](#), also known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory disease. Pertussis is known for uncontrollable, violent coughing which often makes it hard to breathe and results in a "whooping" sound. Pertussis very contagious and is spread by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria. Many infants who get pertussis are infected by older siblings, parents or caregivers who might not even know they have the disease. Symptoms of pertussis usually develop within 5–10 days after being exposed, but sometimes not for as long as 3 weeks. Pertussis most commonly affects infants and young children and can be fatal, especially in babies less than 1 year of age.



The best way to [prevent pertussis](#) among infants, children, teens, and adults is to get vaccinated. In the United States, the recommended pertussis vaccine for infants and children is called DTaP. This is a combination vaccine that protects against three diseases: diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. Vaccine protection for these three diseases fades with time. There is a booster for preteens, teens and adults for protection against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap). Being up-to-date with pertussis vaccines is especially important for families with and caregivers of new infants, and pregnant women are recommended to be vaccinated with Tdap during every pregnancy. Infants with a cough illness should be seen by their health care provider.

Good health habits like covering your cough and washing your hands often can help stop the spread of germs and prevent the spread of illnesses like pertussis:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- Stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands often to help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.