



PERTUSSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH)

What is pertussis?

- Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by bacteria called *Bordetella pertussis*. Pertussis is also known as “whooping cough.”

What are symptoms that could occur?

- Symptoms begin like a cold and include fever, runny nose, and a cough that gradually becomes more severe
- After 1-2 weeks the coughing episodes become frequent, persistent, and last longer
- Coughing episodes may cause the person to experience spasms and make a high pitched “whoop” when coughing
- Infants less than 6 months old and adults often do not have the whoop
- Coughing is usually worse at night
- Vomiting can occur with severe coughing episodes
- Coughing episodes can last 1-2 months or longer

How is it spread?

- Pertussis is spread through the air when an infected person sneezes, coughs, or speaks
- The greatest risk of spread is during the early stages of the disease
- Symptoms usually begin 7 – 10 days after exposure

How is it diagnosed and treated?

- Primary care provider evaluation including laboratory work
- Antibiotics are usually prescribed for treatment
- Hospitalization may be required in severe cases

Are there complications?

- Most common in infants and young children
- Can include lack of oxygen, apnea (not breathing), pneumonia, seizures, encephalopathy (swelling of the brain), malnutrition, and death

How can pertussis be prevented?

- Pertussis vaccine is very effective in preventing disease in infants and children
- All children attending day care and school are required to have pertussis vaccine as part of the DTaP series
- Antibiotics may be given to persons exposed to pertussis to prevent disease
- Practice good hand-washing techniques and proper sneeze and cough etiquette

Should the sick child be isolated?

- The child should be kept away from other people
- Schools are required by law to exclude those children not meeting the immunization requirement (4 doses for school entry)
- Schools should immediately notify the Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) at **257-1017** of a reported or suspected case
- The school shall provide the student’s immunization record to the Health Department at the time of the report
- The GCHD will notify the school when and if the case has been confirmed.

When can the child return to day care or school?

- Upon recovery with a minimum of 21 days after development of violent cough
- Or after 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment

Should schools do special cleaning?

- Special cleaning is not necessary. Routine cleaning with EPA approved products is recommended.

If I have any other questions, whom can I contact?

- Call the Genesee County Health Department at 257-3612

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider.