

CAN WHOOPING COUGH BE PREVENTED?



Yes, with the pertussis vaccine, which is part of the DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis) immunization. Five doses of DtaP are given between 2 months of age and six years of age. Vaccine protection wears off after a few years, so it is recommended that children ages 11-18 get a booster dose of a new whooping cough vaccine for teens and adults called Tdap.

Adults, especially those who live or work closely with infants and young children may also receive a Tdap vaccine in place of the Td booster.

Call your doctor or Marion County Health Department at (503) 588-5342 for more information about vaccines.

Covering the cough and careful hand washing has been shown to help keep infections from spreading to others.

Treating people who are in close contact with a person who has whooping cough may help protect young infants.

If the person who has whooping cough works at or attends a school, daycare, or health care facility, he or she must stay home until five days of antibiotics have been completed.

For more information...

Contact your health care provider or Marion County Health Department, (503) 588-5621.



Marion County Health
Department
3180 Center St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Phone (503) 588-5621
Fax (503) 566-2920

Marion County Health Department provides services without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, marital status, mental or physical disability, political affiliation or sexual orientation.

Updated 4/08

Prevent Whooping Cough

(Pertussis)



DISEASE FACTS

WHAT IS WHOOPING COUGH?

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a very contagious disease caused by bacteria (germs). Whooping cough is usually mild in older children and adults, but it often causes severe problems in very young children (especially infants less than one year of age).

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF WHOOPING COUGH?

Whooping cough symptoms have two stages. The first stage (which lasts one to two weeks) begins like a cold, with a runny nose, sneezing, mild fever, and cough that slowly gets worse. The second stage is marked by hard coughing fits. When a child breathes in, he or she may give a whooping noise. During severe coughing spells, a person may vomit or become blue in the face from lack of air. Between coughing spells, the person often appears to be well. The second stage may last for six or more weeks. Adults, teens, and children who have had the vaccine often have milder symptoms that mimic bronchitis or asthma.



Infants under six months may not have a whoop. Infants who have not had all their vaccines have the most severe disease and many may need to stay in the hospital. Some infants may stop breathing for a period of time and may die from whooping cough.

HOW IS WHOOPING COUGH SPREAD?

The germs that cause whooping cough live in the nose, mouth, and throat. The germs are sprayed into the air when a person sneezes, coughs, or talks. Other people nearby can then inhale the germs. Kissing, handling a tissue or sharing a cup used by someone with whooping cough can also spread the disease. The first symptoms most often appear about seven to 10 days after a person is exposed. Infants often get whooping cough from older children or adults.

WHO GETS WHOOPING COUGH?

Anyone can get whooping cough, but the disease is most severe in infants less than 12 months old. Whooping cough can be hard to detect in very young infants, teens, and adults because their symptoms often look like a cold with a nagging cough.

IS WHOOPING COUGH DANGEROUS?

It can be, especially for infants. Whooping cough can cause breathing problems, pneumonia, and swelling of the brain, which can lead to seizures and brain damage. Whooping cough can cause death (rarely), particularly in very young infants.

HOW IS WHOOPING COUGH DIAGNOSED?

A doctor may think a person has whooping cough because of the symptoms, but a sample of mucus must be taken from the back of the nose for testing. This sample is then tested by a lab to see if it is whooping cough.

HOW IS WHOOPING COUGH TREATED?

Antibiotics can make the disease milder if they are started early enough, and will help to prevent the spread of the illness to others. In addition, it is helpful to get plenty of rest and fluids.

