



# Pertussis Recommendations and Prevention 2024

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## What is Whooping Cough (Pertussis)?

Whooping cough is a respiratory illness caused by a type of bacteria called *Bordetella pertussis*. The disease is only found in humans.



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- The bacteria that cause whooping cough spread easily from person to person through the air. When a person with whooping cough sneezes or coughs, they release small particles with the bacteria in them. Other people can then breathe in the bacteria.
- Treating whooping cough early with antibiotics may make the infection less serious.

## Pertussis Vaccines:

- The best way to prevent whooping cough is to get vaccinated. [CDC recommends whooping cough vaccination for everyone.](#)
- Whooping cough vaccines work but aren't perfect. For people who've been vaccinated but still get whooping cough, their illness is generally milder.



## Pertussis Symptoms:

It usually takes 5 to 10 days for symptoms to appear after exposure to the bacteria that cause whooping cough. Sometimes symptoms don't develop for as long as 3 weeks. Whooping cough appears similar to a common cold early on.

**Early symptoms:** Can last for 1 to 2 weeks and usually include:

- Runny or stuffed-up nose
- Low-grade fever (less than 100.4°F)
- Mild, occasional cough
- Wheezing



**Later symptoms:** One to 2 weeks after the first symptoms start, people may develop paroxysms, known as coughing fits for up to 6 weeks.

Coughing fits can cause people to:

- Make a high-pitched "whoop" when they inhale after a coughing fit
- Vomit during or after coughing fits
- Feel very tired after the fit
- Struggle to breathe
- Fracture (break) a rib



These symptoms usually appear in stages and not all at once.

## Are some people at higher risk from whooping cough?

People at greatest risk from whooping cough include:

- Infants under one year old.
- Pregnant people (especially in the third trimester).
- People that have a chronic respiratory illness.
- Whooping cough can cause serious and sometimes deadly complications in babies and young children.

## What to do when you are sick:

Most people with whooping cough can manage their symptoms at home.

- Take antibiotics exactly as prescribed by your healthcare provider.
- Keep your home free from things that cause coughing like: Smoke, Dust, Chemical fumes.
- Get plenty of fluids, including water, juices, and fruits.
- Don't take cough medicine unless your healthcare provider recommends it. Giving cough medicine probably won't help and isn't usually recommended for children younger than 4 years old.

