

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT PERTUSSIS



Before a vaccine was introduced in the late 1940s, pertussis, more commonly known as whooping cough, was a leading cause of childhood illness and death in the United States. The vaccine was so effective that the number of cases in the U.S. went from more than a million diagnosed between 1940-1945, to less than 3,000 a year by the 1970s. Pertussis has again become increasingly common due to varied factors including improved diagnostic tests, more spread of the bacteria that causes pertussis, and waning immunity from current vaccines. In recent years several states have reported significant outbreaks, with most deaths occurring in babies younger than three months old.

To help protect yourself and your family from pertussis, here's what you should know:

- **Whooping cough most commonly affects babies and young children but can affect anyone at any age.**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about one third of babies younger than one year old who contract whooping cough end up in the hospital. Young children are also at risk of other complications, such as pneumonia, pauses in breathing (apnea), and dehydration. The population at highest risk for severe complications are very young infants who are too small to get vaccinated against it, older adults, pregnant women and those who are immunocompromised.

- **Pertussis is known for the distinct "whooping" sound made at the end of a coughing episode, giving it the name.**

Pertussis usually starts with cold-like symptoms, it is often not diagnosed until after 1-2 weeks, when the illness progresses from a mild cough into the second stage of persistent and rapid coughing spells. This stage is known as the paroxysmal stage, which is categorized by violent coughing fits that often result in vomiting and is followed by a whooping sound. These coughing episodes may occur a few times a day up to several times an hour and are often worse at night and can interfere with sleep. This stage can last up to three months.

- **Vaccines are available to help prevent whooping cough across the lifespan.**

Vaccination is the best protection against pertussis. There are two types of vaccines to protect against whooping cough:

- DTaP to protect young children against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis.
- Tdap for use during pregnancy and to protect preteens through adults against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis.

Whooping cough (Pertussis) vaccines are for everyone



DTaP
for young children

- ✓ 2, 4 and 6 months
- ✓ 15 through 18 months
- ✓ 4 through 6 years

Tdap
for preteens

- ✓ 11 through 12 years

Tdap
for pregnant women

- ✓ During the 27-36th week of each pregnancy

Tdap
for adults
(including adults with COPD or asthma)

- ✓ Anytime for those who have never received it



Lung.org/pertussis



County of Morris
Department of Law & Public Safety
Division of Public Health
P.O. Box 900
Morristown, NJ 07963-0900
(973) 631-5184



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**For more information on Pertussis, visit:
www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/pertussis**