



Pertussis (Whooping Cough)



What is Pertussis (Whooping Cough)?

Pertussis is a very contagious disease of the respiratory tract caused by bacteria called *Bordetella pertussis*. Pertussis is also known as “whooping cough” due to the “whoop” sound often made when the infected person tries to breathe after hard coughing and choking spells. Children younger than 6 months of age may not have the strength to have a “whoop”.

How is Pertussis spread?

Pertussis is spread through airborne droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. The greatest risk of spread is during the early stage when the symptoms resemble a cold.

How is Pertussis treated?

- Call a doctor if you think you, or your children have been exposed.
- An antibiotic is usually prescribed for treatment.
- Drink plenty of fluids to avoid being dehydrated.
- Carefully cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.
- Wash hands often using soap and water.
- Stay away from others, **especially** infants and young children, until you have been on antibiotics for 5 days.

How can Pertussis be prevented?

The best way to prevent pertussis (whooping cough) among infants, children, teens, and adults is to get vaccinated. Also, keep infants and other people at high risk for pertussis complications away from infected people.

See www.cdc.gov/pertussis or www.michigan.gov for specific guidelines.

Symptoms of Pertussis:

- Low grade fever, runny nose, sneezing and occasional cough. In 1-2 weeks the cough becomes more severe.
- During bouts of coughing, the lips and nails may turn blue from lack of air. Vomiting can occur with severe episodes.
- Between coughing episodes people may feel and appear fairly healthy.
- In children less than 1 year old, complications include pneumonia, convulsions, and in rare cases, brain damage. The majority of deaths from Pertussis occur in infants younger than 2 months of age.
- Many people cough for 1 month or longer.

*Jackson County Health Department
1715 Lansing Ave.
Jackson, MI 49202
(517) 788-4420
www.co.jackson.mi.us/hd/*

*Source: www.cdc.gov
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English 1-888-246-2675
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