



Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

What is Pertussis?

Pertussis is also known as “whooping cough.” It is a respiratory illness caused by bacteria.

There are two ways to be infected:

- When someone who has whooping cough, coughs on you/your child
- By touching something that has been coughed on and then touching your/your child’s eye’s, nose, or mouth.

What are the symptoms?

- At the beginning whooping cough is like a cold. Your child may have a runny nose, low-grade fever (up to 38.5°C) and a cough. Adults who have a bad cold may also have whooping cough (although this is rare).
- The most common way to recognize whooping cough is by the cough, **which gets worse over time.**
- Your child will cough many times in a row and then take a sudden breath. This breath between coughs may make a “whoop” sound. Babies may not make this whoop sound.
- Your child’s face may become very red and the tongue may be sticking out.
- Your child may also cough up thick mucus.
- Your child may vomit, gag or wretch with coughing episodes. This is common.
- The cough may last 4-6 weeks or longer (up to several months). Some cultures refer to this as the “100-day cough.”

What else might develop?

- The forceful coughing can cause small blood vessels in the eyes or on the face to break. These will look like small red streaks and will go away on their own.
- Your child may also lose weight or become dry (dehydration). When this happens, your child will pee less often, or will have dark pee. If this happens call your doctor.
- Your child may develop an ear infection, which must also be treated. Have your child checked if he or she is pulling his or her ears or shaking their head.
- Pneumonia may also develop. This is part of the illness and may mean your child will have to be in the hospital. Have your child checked if there are breathing problems such as:
 - having a hard time breathing
 - choking, gasping or grunting
 - breathing faster than usual (even when at rest)
 - lips have a blue tinge

How is whooping cough treated?

- Whooping cough can be treated early on with an antibiotic called Erythromycin. This must be taken by mouth for a total of 10 days.
- It is important for your child to drink lots of fluids.
- If the cough is serious enough, some children need to be kept in the hospital. They may need extra oxygen or humidity, especially during coughing spells.
- Some children may need to have an IV to give them enough fluids until they are better.



Your child's medicine is:
It should be given every:
Until:

What else do I need to know?

- It may take some time for the illness to show up once someone has been infected. This is called the **incubation time** of the disease.
- Your child can get whooping cough even if he or she has been immunized for it.
- Your child should not be in contact with other people until he or she has been taking the Erythromycin for five days.
- It is important to wash your hands after touching your child's mouth or nose, or any objects the child may have coughed on or had in his or her mouth. This will help prevent spread of the disease to yourself or others.
- Young babies are more prone to getting complications from the whooping cough.
- Any member of the family may get whooping cough, or already have it and not know it. This can be true for older family members who live with you as well. Talk to the doctor if you think someone else in your family is sick.

When should I call the doctor?

Call the doctor if:

- Your child is not eating or drinking, is peeing less or has a dry mouth.
- The cough lasts longer than 4 weeks.
- Your child is pulling at his or her ears or shaking the head.
- Your child has breathing problems.
- You have any other questions or concerns.

Who do I call?

Call:

- Dr. _____ at _____
- Health Links – Info Santé at **204-788-8200** (toll free 1-888-315-9257)



When should I bring my child to the hospital?

Bring your child to the hospital if:

- Your child's face becomes blue, dark red, purple, or very pale with coughing
- Your child becomes limp, sluggish, or does not respond to you during or just after a coughing spell.

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