

Pertussis/Whooping Cough

What is Pertussis/Whooping Cough?

Pertussis is also known as Whooping cough is a respiratory illness caused by a type of bacteria called *Bordetella pertussis* and it is very contagious. Spread person to person through the air when a person with whooping cough sneezes or coughs, they release small particles with the bacteria in them.

Causes

The pertussis bacteria attaches to the cilia that line part of the upper respiratory system. The bacteria releases toxins (poison) which damages the cilia and cause airways to swell. It may begin as a common cold, but unlike a cold, the coughing can last for weeks or months.

Symptoms

It may vary from person to person based on their age and if they are vaccinated. It usually takes about 5 – 10 days for symptoms to appear after exposure to the bacteria. Sometimes symptoms don't develop for as long as 3 weeks.

Early Symptoms – can last for 1-2 weeks

- Runny or stuffed-up nose
- Low grade fever (less than 100.4 Fahrenheit)
- Mild occasional cough

Later Symptoms – 1-2 weeks after the first symptoms start

- People may develop paroxysms (coughing fits – that usually last 1-6 weeks but can last for up to 10 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, but usually seem well in-between fits
- Have difficulty sleeping at night
- Struggle to breathe
- Fracture (break) a rib

Prevention

- Practice good hygiene practices (wash or sanitize hands thoroughly)
- Clean or sanitize contaminated surfaces with disinfecting solution or soap and water
- Wear mask if you are coughing
- Cover your cough by coughing into your upper arm or tissue
- Put used tissues properly into a bag and tie it properly before disposing or burning.
- the best way to prevent whooping cough is to get vaccinated.
- Make sure your children are up to date with all their vaccinations.

Remember: If you are experiencing any of the symptoms, self isolate and call Primary Health Care on Ph: 20065/20066