



# Pertussis Fast Facts

Pertussis infections are also known as  
Whooping Cough.

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## Basic information

Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*. It is characterized by severe coughing fits that can last for several weeks or even months. The cough often ends in a "whooping" sound when the person breathes in, especially in young children.



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## Important Facts

1. Pertussis can be particularly dangerous for infants and young children, as it can lead to serious complications like pneumonia, seizures, brain damage, and even death.
2. Pertussis spreads through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It's highly contagious, especially in the early stages before the severe cough develops. Close contact with an infected person increases the risk of transmission.
3. **Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent pertussis**, with the DTaP vaccine recommended for children and the Tdap vaccine for adolescents and adults. Covering the mouth when coughing or sneezing, washing hands frequently, and staying away from others if sick can help prevent the spread.

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## Symptoms

Early symptoms resemble a common cold: runny nose, sneezing, mild cough, and low-grade fever. This stage is when the person is most contagious. If not treated it can lead to severe coughing fits that have the characteristic "whooping" sound, difficulty breathing, and vomiting and exhaustion after a coughing fit.

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## Treatment

Antibiotics can be effective in reducing the severity of the disease and preventing its spread. Supportive care, including fluids, rest, and management of symptoms, is crucial, particularly for infants and young children who may require hospitalization in severe cases.