

PERTUSSIS (Whooping Cough)



Fact Sheet

Pertussis is a very contagious respiratory disease caused by the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*. It is commonly referred to as “Whooping Cough” because of the “whoop” sound often made when a person tries to catch a breath between coughs. Severe illness is most common in young children who have not been immunized. It is especially dangerous (and sometimes deadly) to infants.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms appear 1-3 weeks after exposure and are usually mild at first:

- Runny nose
- Sneezing
- Mild fever
- Occasional cough

After 1-2 weeks, as the “cold-like” symptoms improve, the cough worsens, resulting in:

- Severe, prolonged cough
- “Whooping” sound may occur with breath
- Red or blue face
- Vomiting can be provoked
- Extreme fatigue

See your health care provider for symptoms that are severe or do not get better.

If you would like to learn more about this, and other communicable diseases, go to <http://www.cdc.gov>.

This fact sheet was created by the Health Services Department of Beaverton School District and has been approved by the Washington County Health Department, Disease Control and Prevention Program.

HOW TO PREVENT GETTING AND SPREADING PERTUSSIS:

- **Get yourself and your child(ren) vaccinated.**
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid sharing objects.
- Wash hands often.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- If you’ve been directly exposed to a person with pertussis, antibiotics (in addition to the vaccine) may help to prevent illness.
- Stay home if you are ill.



Pertussis complications include pneumonia, ear infections, dehydration, brain damage and death.

Babies are the most vulnerable. It is important to protect infants by ensuring others around them are **vaccinated** (friends, childcare, and healthcare providers).

