

# Pertussis Disease (Whooping Cough)

## What is pertussis disease?

- Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious bacteria respiratory disease.
- Pertussis is known for uncontrollable, violent coughing which often makes it hard to breathe.
- After cough fits, someone with pertussis often needs to take deep breaths, which result in a “whooping” sound.
- Pertussis can affect people of all ages, but can be very serious, even deadly, for babies less than a year old.
- Pertussis is a highly contagious disease and can affect up to 80% household contacts.

## What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms of pertussis usually develop within 5 to 10 days after you are exposed, but may not develop for as long as 3 weeks.
- First week or two, early symptoms may include:
  - Subtle onset of runny nose.
  - Low grade fever.
  - Sneezing.
  - Mild, occasional cough.
  - Apnea or stop breathing when asleep.
- After 1 to 2 weeks, symptoms may include:
  - Fits of many, rapid coughs followed by a high-pitched “whoop” sound..
  - Throwing up during or after coughing fits.
  - Very tired after coughing fits.

## How does pertussis spread?

- Pertussis is spread from person-to person.
  - Coughing and sneezing.
  - Spend a lot of time near one another and share breathing space.
  - Some babies get pertussis from older siblings, parents, or caregivers who might not even know they have the disease.
- The best prevention for pertussis is vaccine, but no vaccine is 100% effective.

## Where can I find more information?

- Ask your doctor, or your local county health department.
- Email the Alabama Department of Public Health, Immunization Division, at [immunization@adph.state.al.us](mailto:immunization@adph.state.al.us).
- Go to [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) and type 'pertussis disease' in the SEARCH box.



Alabama Department of Public Health

Immunization Division, 201 Monroe St, Montgomery, AL 36104

1-800-469-4599 [www.adph.org/imm](http://www.adph.org/imm) 2/29/16

# Pertussis Vaccine

## Who should get pertussis vaccine?

- There are 2 vaccines which protect against pertussis. DTaP for children up to 6 years of age and Tdap for people 7 years of age and older.
- People who have not had been vaccinated and are in contact with a baby.
- Babies beginning at 2 months of age, followed by a total of five doses through age 4-6 years.
- Adolescents aged 11 through 18 years should receive a single Tdap.
- Adults aged 19 through 64 years should receive a single Tdap.
- Pregnant women should receive a Tdap for each pregnancy.
- Anyone who has not received the full five doses of pertussis vaccine.
- Either if you are exposed to pertussis and/or have the disease, you should still receive vaccine containing pertussis.
- All adults are recommended one dose of Tdap as soon as possible, especially if pregnant or in close contact with infants.

## What are the vaccine side effects and risks?

- Mild (common) problems after the vaccine may include:
  - Fever.
  - Pain, redness, and/or swelling where shot was given.
  - Local reactions such as pain, redness, or swelling.
  - Drowsiness, fretfulness.
  - Tiredness.
- Moderate (uncommon) problems after the vaccine may include:
  - Seizure (jerking or staring).
  - Non-stop crying, for 3 hours or more.
  - High fever, over 105°F.
- Severe (very rare) problems after the vaccine may include:
- Serious allergic reaction.

## Where can I find more information?

- Ask your doctor, or your local county health department.
- Email the Alabama Department of Public Health, at [immunization@adph.state.al.us](mailto:immunization@adph.state.al.us).
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