

# 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.
- If a child is diagnosed with pertussis, the child should not attend school or day care until after they have received antibiotics.

## 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 stopped/paused 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
  - Tiredness after coughing fits

## How does pertussis spread?

Pertussis is spread from person to person by the following:

- Coughing and sneezing
- Spending a lot of time near one another and sharing breathing space
- Some babies may also 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

# Pertussis Vaccine

## Who should get pertussis vaccine?

- There are two 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.
- 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 severe allergic reaction

## Where can I find more information?

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- Go to [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) and type 'pertussis vaccine' in the SEARCH box.



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