



Top Ten Facts about Pertussis

1. Pertussis is the medical term for whooping cough, an infection which is characterized by persistent coughing, which can last 3 months or longer.
2. Pertussis is caused by a type of bacteria named *Bordetella pertussis*.
3. The symptoms of pertussis infection begin like the common cold, with a stuffy, runny nose, sneezing and perhaps a mild cough. Several weeks later, coughing becomes more severe and can affect one's sleep and even result in vomiting after the coughing spells. The cough of pertussis is often described as violent, and occurs as a series of rapid coughs (paroxysms), which may end with a high-pitched "whooping" sound from sudden intake of breath. Not everyone with pertussis develops a whoop.
4. People with pertussis infection are highly contagious, spreading the infection by coughing or sneezing. Infants can easily catch pertussis from adolescents or adults who may not feel particularly ill, although they have some coughing.
5. Very young children with pertussis are sicker than teens or adults. Over half of children less than one year of age with pertussis get hospitalized; 90% of the deaths from pertussis occur in infants, most are less than 3 months of age.
6. Complications of pertussis infection in children include pneumonia, seizures, and dehydration. Teens or adults may get pneumonia or fracture a rib from the strong coughing.
7. Anyone who has a cough lasting longer than 2 weeks should be evaluated by their health care provider and tested for pertussis infection.
8. Certain antibiotics can be used to treat pertussis infection so that a person becomes less contagious (after 5 days of antibiotics) but the persistent cough is often not affected.
9. In the U.S. in 2010, more than 27,000 cases of pertussis were reported to public health. Pertussis infections affecting teenagers have increased since the 1980's.
10. It is estimated that more than 3 million cases of pertussis occur in the U.S. each year – most of these are not diagnosed or reported to public health authorities.

Provided by the Indiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (INAAP).

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