



## Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

### What is it?

- Pertussis is an infection in the airways caused by bacteria.

### Signs and symptoms

- Symptoms start as a common cold with:
  - Sneezing, runny nose, mild fever and a mild cough
- The cough gets progressively worse.
  - The cough is severe, repeated and forceful. The coughing periods are often followed by vomiting and/or a whoop sound before the next breath.
- The cough can last many months and is more common at night.
- Pertussis can cause pneumonia, seizures, brain damage or death.

### How is it spread?

- It is spread by breathing the air of a person who has the bacteria.
- It can be spread by touching saliva or mucus of a person who has the bacteria.
- Without medicine, Pertussis can be shared a few days before a person has a cough and up to three weeks after the cough starts.
- A person with pertussis will be given antibiotics. Household members may be given antibiotics depending on the assessment completed by your Health Care Provider.
- An infected child should not return to school until they have taken antibiotics for 5 days and feel well enough to return.

### How to Decrease the Spread?

- The best way to protect yourself and others is to be vaccinated. Some people who have been vaccinated may still get per-



tussis but is a milder form of the disease than those who have not been vaccinated.

- Wash your hands often. Avoid your touching face, nose and eyes.
- Use good coughing technique by coughing into your sleeve.

### Pregnant women:

Pregnant women in their third trimester and infants under one are at the highest risk of complications and should be treated with antibiotics. Call your Health Care Provider.

### Recommended Absence

- 5 days after treatment with appropriate antibiotics
- If untreated, approximately 3 weeks

Pertussis **must** be reported to the Medical Officer of Health as required by the Health Promotion and Protection Act.

### Resources

[www.aboutkidshealth.ca](http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca)  
[www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)

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