



## Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

### What is it?

Pertussis, more commonly known as whooping cough, is caused by contagious bacteria called *Bordetella pertussis*. It is spread by contact with discharges from the nose or throat of an infected person or by droplets of nose and throat discharges in the air from an infected person when they sneeze or cough. The disease can be transmitted to others from several days before and up to three weeks after the onset of the cough.

### What are the signs and symptoms?

Whooping cough begins as an irritating cough that gradually develops into severe coughing spells. These severe coughing spells are typically followed by a high-pitched whoop as the person inhales. These severe coughing episodes are often followed by vomiting. Fever is generally absent or only slightly above normal. If a person is infected, they will begin to show signs and symptoms from six to 20 days (average nine to 10 days) after coming into contact with someone who has the disease.

### What is the treatment?

Infants and children under seven are at the highest risk of complications from this disease so it is important that children are vaccinated.

If a child is diagnosed with whooping cough they and anyone living in their home will be placed on antibiotics. An infected child

should not return to school until they have been taking specific antibiotics for five days and feel well enough to do so.

Although people who have been vaccinated may still get whooping cough, it is a much milder form of the disease than those who have not been vaccinated.



For more information, please contact a member of Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit's Infectious Disease Team.



#### Simcoe

P.O. Box 247, 12 Gilbertson Drive  
Simcoe, ON N3Y 4L1  
519.426.6170 / 905.318.6623

#### Caledonia

282 Argyle Street South  
Caledonia, ON N3W 1K7  
905.318.5367

**Email:** [info@hnhu.org](mailto:info@hnhu.org)

**Web:** [www.hnhu.org](http://www.hnhu.org)