

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Fact Sheet

- **Pertussis**, more commonly known as “Whooping Cough” or the 100-day cough, is **vaccine preventable**.
- **Highly contagious** bacterial infection affecting the mouth, nose and throat. Spread from person to person by direct contact with mucus or droplets produced during coughing and sneezing.
- **Symptoms of pertussis** may begin with a cold then progress to persistent coughing episodes which are usually worse at night sometimes followed by a “whooping” sound, gagging, vomiting or exhaustion. The person does not appear ill between coughing episodes. Attempts to treat symptoms (i.e. over the counter cough syrups) at home do not help. Medical attention is needed to diagnose and treat pertussis. **Go to your doctor!**
- **Pertussis can occur at any age.** Children who are too young to be fully immunized and those who have not yet completed the primary three doses vaccination series are at highest risk for severe illness.
- **Persons with pertussis must stay home for the full five day course of antibiotics even if they feel better.** You are considered contagious until completion of the antibiotics. This means no school, sports, camps, sleepovers, work or social activities until completion of antibiotics.
- **Persons with pertussis should stay away from infants and young children until completion of antibiotic treatment.**
- Household members and others who are **close contacts** (direct face-to-face exposure within 3 feet of an individual with pertussis for \geq one hour) are usually treated with antibiotics to prevent getting pertussis. While on preventive antibiotic treatment close contacts can continue their normal daily activities unless they have already developed symptoms. If symptoms have developed, close contacts should go to their doctor for evaluation and treatment then stay home for the duration of treatment.
- **The best defense is vaccination!** Routine pertussis vaccination starts in children as young as two months. Children should receive a total of **five doses** prior to entering kindergarten.
- Protection from pertussis vaccine wanes over time which is why a one time dose of **Tdap** (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) vaccine is recommended for children between the ages of 10-12 years and for adults.
- **New parents and grandparents** should receive Tdap vaccine before the baby’s birth or before bringing the newborn home from the hospital.
- Tdap vaccine can be given to breastfeeding mothers!
- Tdap vaccine is readily available at your doctor’s or at the local health department. Call the **Tompkins County Health Department** at (607) 274-6616 to make an appointment.

Protect yourself and others by following these healthy actions:

- Cover your nose when sneezing OR sneeze into your elbow
- Cover your mouth when coughing OR cough into your elbow
- Wash your hands after sneezing and coughing
- Stay home when ill
- Get vaccinated!



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