

Information on Pertussis/Whooping Cough:

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) is an infection that affects the airways, and it can easily spread from person to person by coughing or sneezing. Pertussis can cause a severe cough that lasts for weeks or months, sometimes leading to coughing fits and/or vomiting. Anyone can get pertussis, but it can be very dangerous for babies and people with weakened immune systems. Family members with pertussis, especially siblings and parents, can spread pertussis to babies.

Whooping cough is very contagious. The vaccine usually protects against whooping cough, but older children, teenagers and adults who were completely immunized before they started kindergarten can get whooping cough, because protection from the vaccine or from having the disease wears off over time. This is why a booster dose of vaccine, called Tdap, is recommended for those 10-18 years of age and for adults.

Pertussis (Whooping cough) symptoms change as the disease progresses, and it looks different in children and adults. Symptoms of pertussis may appear 5 to 10 days following exposure but can take up to 21 days to occur. The first symptoms of pertussis are similar to those of a common cold: a runny nose, sneezing, a low-grade fever, and a mild occasional cough. After a week or two, a persistent cough may develop, which can become severe and spasmodic with a distinctive “whooping” sound. During such an attack, the person may turn blue, vomit, and become exhausted. Between coughing attacks, the person usually appears normal.