

**BAY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
FACT SHEET:**

PERTUSSIS

What is Pertussis?

Pertussis is a childhood disease caused by bacteria and is commonly called whooping cough. It affects the respiratory tract.

What are the symptoms of Pertussis?

- An irritating cough, which after one to two weeks, causes the person to experience spasms and to make a high pitched "whoop" when coughing. The cough can last one to two months or longer. Infants less than six months old and adults often do not have the whoop.
- A clear mucous is often coughed up.
- Vomiting after coughing.
- Pneumonia is the most common cause of death, although the number of deaths in the U.S. is low.

How is Pertussis spread?

The bacteria are spread through the air when an infected person sneezes, coughs, or speaks and another person breathes in droplets from the infected person's nose, throat, or mouth. (A person is likely to spread Pertussis before the "whooping cough" stage actually begins.)

How long after exposure do symptoms begin?

Seven to ten days.

Is Pertussis contagious?

Yes, Pertussis is very contagious before the whooping cough stage and shortly after it begins.

What can be done to prevent Pertussis?

Pertussis vaccine is effective in preventing the illness in infants and children. A series of five shots is given from two months of age until school age, usually in combination with the Diphtheria and Tetanus (DTP) shots. Pertussis vaccine is not required in adults or children older than seven years. If an adult or child is exposed to Pertussis, a doctor can give them an antibiotic to decrease the likelihood of symptoms.

- **Vaccinate all children and give antibiotics to adults and children after exposure.**
- Cover mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing with a tissue or turn away when coughing.
- Immediately throw away used tissues, followed by careful handwashing.
- Avoid sharing objects (pacifiers, toys, silverware, etc.) if they have been in the mouth; wash objects in hot soapy water between use.

*For more information about vaccination or treatment for Pertussis,
call the Bay County Health Department at 989-895-4009*