

Stop Pertussis!



Q. What is pertussis?

Pertussis is a severe respiratory disease caused by bacteria. It often causes serious problems in babies. Pertussis infection in babies can cause pneumonia, heart problems, bleeding in the brain and death. It is usually milder in older children and adults.

Pertussis spreads easily from person to person. Infected people are most contagious during the earliest stages of the illness for up to about two weeks after cough begins. The time between infection with pertussis and the start of symptoms is usually seven to 10 days but can be as long as 21 days



Q. Who gets pertussis?

Pertussis can occur at any age, but infants and young children are at highest risk of serious illness. In Oregon, many pertussis cases occur in newborns who are too young to be immunized.



Q. What are the symptoms of pertussis?

- The first symptoms—runny nose, sneezing, mild fever, and cough—usually appear five to 21 days after a person is infected.
- After one or two weeks, the cough gets worse and there are often strong fits of coughing. This may last six weeks or longer.
- In children, coughing fits are often followed by a whooping sound as they try to catch their breath.
- After coughing, infected people may find it hard to catch their breath. They might vomit or become blue in the face from lack of air.
- Coughing spells can be so severe that it is hard for babies to eat, drink or breathe.



Q. How does pertussis spread?

- Bacteria live in the nose, mouth and throat, and are sprayed into the air when an infected person sneezes, coughs or talks.
- Touching a used tissue or sharing a cup can also spread the disease.
- An adult with mild illness can spread the disease to infants and young children, causing them to become very ill.

Q. Is pertussis dangerous?

Pertussis can be very dangerous for infants. Infants younger than one year old have the highest risk of pertussis complications and death.

Q. How is pertussis diagnosed?

A doctor may diagnosis pertussis based on symptoms and laboratory tests.

Q. How do you treat it?

Pertussis is treated with medicine prescribed by a health care provider.

Q. How can I prevent pertussis?

- Immunization is the best way to prevent pertussis.
- Infants can start to be protected with vaccine at 2 months old. To fully protect them, they should get four more doses of pertussis vaccine over the next few years.
- Immunity wears off, so teens and adults need a Tdap booster shot. This helps protect teens and adults from getting pertussis and spreading it to vulnerable infants.
- Pregnant women should ask their health care provider about getting a Tdap booster. This will help protect their babies from pertussis.
- Cover your cough and wash your hands.
- Keep babies away from anyone who is coughing.

Q. Is the pertussis vaccine safe?

Yes, the vaccine is safe, and it helps prevent spread of pertussis. There might be pain or swelling at the injection site or fever, but the risk of the disease is much greater.

Q. Is there any pertussis in Oregon?

Yes. We see outbreaks of pertussis every few years. In 2012 Oregon had a pertussis epidemic with the most cases seen since 1953.

Q. Where can I get more information?

- Ask your health care provider, contact your local health department, or visit the Oregon Immunization Program's website at www.healthoregon.org/imm .
- To find out where to get a pertussis vaccination, call SafeNet at 211.

Document accessibility: For individuals with disabilities or individuals who speak a language other than English, OHA can provide information in alternate formats such as translations, large print, or braille. Contact the COVID-19 Communications Unit at 1-971-673-2411, 711 TTY or COVID19.LanguageAccess@dhsosha.state.or.us.