

## What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough—or pertussis—is a very serious respiratory (in the lungs and breathing tubes) infection caused by the pertussis bacteria. It causes violent coughing you can't stop. Whooping cough is most harmful for young babies and can be deadly.

## What are the symptoms of whooping cough?

Whooping cough starts with the following symptoms:

- Runny or stuffed-up nose
- Sneezing
- Mild Cough
- A pause in breathing in infants (apnea)

After 1 to 2 weeks, coughing, this can be severe, starts. Children and babies may then begin to develop these more serious problems:

- Coughing very hard, over and over.
- Gasping for breath after a coughing fit. They may make a “whooping” sound. This sound is where the name “whooping cough” comes from. Babies may not cough or make this sound—they may gag and gasp.
- Difficulty breathing, eating, drinking, or sleeping because of coughing fits. These coughing fits happen more at night.
- Turning blue while coughing from lack of oxygen.
- Vomiting after coughing fits.

Coughing fits can last for 10 weeks, and sometimes happen again the next time the child has a respiratory illness.

## Is it serious?

Whooping cough is most dangerous for babies and young children. In fact, babies younger than 1 year old who have pertussis may:

- Need to be cared for in the hospital
- Develop pneumonia (a serious lung infection)
- Have seizures (jerking or twitching of the muscles or staring)
- Suffer brain damage

Whooping cough can even be deadly. From 2000 through 2014, there were 277 deaths from whooping cough reported in the United States. Almost all of the deaths (241 of the 277) were babies younger than 3 months of age, who are too young to be protected against whooping cough by getting the shots.



The best way to protect against whooping cough is by getting the diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis shot (also called the **DTaP** shot).

Doctors recommend that all children get the vaccine.

## How does whooping cough spread?

Whooping cough spreads easily through the air when a person who has whooping cough breathes, coughs, or sneezes. Almost everyone who is not immune to whooping cough will get sick if exposed to it. A person can spread the disease from the very beginning of the sickness (when he has cold-like symptoms) and for at least 2 weeks after coughing starts.

Your baby can catch whooping cough from adults, grandparents, or older brothers or sisters who don't know they have the disease. New moms with whooping cough can give it to their newborn babies.

## Why should my child get the DTaP shot?

The DTaP shot:

- Helps protect your child from whooping cough (pertussis), a potentially serious disease (and also protects against diphtheria and tetanus)
- Prevents your child from having violent coughing fits from whooping cough
- Helps keep your child from missing school or childcare (and keeps you from missing work to care for your sick child)

## Is the DTaP shot safe?

Yes. The DTaP shot is very safe. Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. Most children who get the DTaP shot have no side effects.

## Where can I learn more about the DTaP shot and whooping cough?

To learn more about the DTaP shot or whooping cough, contact us at:

**Carson City Health and Human Services** 900 East Long Street, Carson City, NV 89706  
(775) 887-2190 or visit [Gethealthycarsoncity.org/pertussis-whooping-cough](http://Gethealthycarsoncity.org/pertussis-whooping-cough)

CDC recommends the tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis shot for everyone 11 years and older, including pregnant women. This shot is for older children and adults and is called **Tdap**.



Doctors recommend that your child get five doses of the DTaP shot for best protection.

Your child will need one dose at each of the following ages:

- 2 months
- 4 months
- 6 months
- 15 – 18 months
- 4 – 6 years