

If you think that you may have whooping cough:

See your GP promptly.

Avoid other people while you are unwell and coughing, particularly young children eg at child care centres, pre-school and school

How is whooping cough diagnosed?

If a doctor suspects that you may have whooping cough they will probably take a swab from the back of the nose or throat, or a blood test to help confirm whether you have whooping cough.

How is it treated?

A specific antibiotic - usually azithromycin for five days, or erythromycin or clarithromycin for seven days, is used to treat whooping cough. These antibiotics can prevent the spread of the whooping cough bacteria to other people.

Coughing often continues for many weeks despite treatment. It will eventually clear.

What is the public health response?

The Doctor and laboratory must notify the Department of Health of those people with confirmed whooping cough. The local public health unit will then follow up these people with a telephone call to advise on ways to prevent transmission to others.

The Public health nurse will advise parents of children in the same room as the infected person at child care, pre-school or school that their children will be excluded for a period of 14 days if they have not received three doses of pertussis vaccine, or completed five days of a course of antibiotic treatment. Fully immunised children will not be excluded from childcare, pre-school or school.

Further information – Public Health Units

Metropolitan

Upper North 9345 7100

Lower North 9224 1603

Fremantle 9431 0200

Country

Albany 9842 7500

Geraldton 9956 1985

Broome 9194 1643

Kalgoorlie 9080 8200

Bunbury 9792 2500

Northam 9622 4320

Carnarvon 9941 0560

Port Hedland 9172 8333

Or

Contact HealthInfo on 1300 135 030

Visit www.public.health.wa.gov.au

Whooping Cough (Pertussis)



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

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Department of Health 2008

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Delivering a Healthy WA

Whooping Cough affects people of all ages, but it is most serious in young children less than 6 months of age.

Whooping cough can be prevented by getting children immunised at two, four and six months of age, followed by booster doses at four years and 12 years of age.

Booster doses are also recommended for adults living or working with small children. Vaccination helps control further spread of the disease.

What is Whooping Cough (Pertussis)?

Whooping Cough (Pertussis) is a highly contagious respiratory tract infection.

What are the symptoms?

- Whooping Cough usually begins just like a cold, with a runny nose, tiredness and sometimes a mild fever.
- Coughing develops, usually in bouts, followed by a deep gasp (or “whoop”). Sometimes people vomit after coughing.
- Whooping cough can be very serious in small children. They can stop breathing during coughing attacks and may need to go to the hospital.
- Older children and adults may have a less serious illness, but will have bouts of coughing that continue for many weeks regardless of treatment.

How is it spread?

Whooping cough is spread to other people by droplets from coughing or sneezing. Untreated, a person with whooping cough can spread it to other people for up to three weeks after onset of cough.

The time between exposure and getting sick is usually seven to ten days, but can be up to three weeks.

Who is at risk?

- New parents
- Grand parents, child care/ health care workers
- Anyone can get whooping cough
- People living in the same household as someone with whooping cough are more likely to catch it
- Immunisation greatly reduces your risk of infection, but reinfection can occur, as immunity wanes over a period of 7-8 years.

How is it prevented?

Immunise your child on time

The vaccine does not give lifelong protection against whooping cough, so;

- Children need to be immunised at two, four and six months
- Booster doses are needed at four years of age and again at 12 years of age.

Immunisation is available through the school based program, general practitioners and some local councils.

Keep your baby away from people who cough

- Babies need two or three vaccinations before they are protected. For this reason, it is very important to keep people with coughing illnesses away from your baby so that they don't pass on pertussis or other germs.

Get immunised if you are an adult in close contact with small children

A vaccine for adults is available. It is recommended for:

- Both parents when planning a pregnancy, or soon after the baby is born
- Grandparent and others who will have contact with the baby
- Adults working with young children, especially health care and child care workers.

If you are a close contact of someone with whooping cough

- ... watch out for the symptoms. If symptoms develop, see your doctor, take this Fact Sheet with you and mention your contact with someone with whooping cough
- Some close contacts at high risk (e.g., children under one year, children not fully vaccinated, and women at the end of their pregnancy) and others who live or work with high-risk people may need to take antibiotics if they are exposed to someone with whooping cough to prevent infection.

