

Protect Your Child from Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

What Is Whooping Cough?

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a highly contagious bacterial infection caused by *Bordetella pertussis* that affects the lungs and airways. It causes severe coughing fits followed by breathing in with a high-pitched noise that sounds like a "whoop." It's especially dangerous for babies under 6 months, who can suffer from pneumonia, hospitalization, or death.

Symptoms

- Runny or stuffy nose
- Red, watery eyes
- Fever
- Cough
- Vomiting
- Red or blue face or straining while coughing
- Extreme tiredness
- High-pitched "whoop" sound during the next breath of air
- Gagging, struggling to breathe, or long pauses between breaths
- Blue or purple skin, lips, or nails

Vaccines that Protect Against Whooping Cough

Through vaccination, cases affect only young children in the process of receiving doses and adults and teens whose original doses have worn off (every 10 years). Pregnant women can get vaccinated in late pregnancy to protect babies less than 2 months old. Subsequent doses for children increase immunity and lessen symptoms in the case of infection.

All pertussis vaccines are combined with protection against diphtheria and tetanus.

Vaccine	Age Group	Brand Examples
DTaP	Babies (2+ months) & children under 7	Daptacel®, Infanrix®, Pediarix®, Pentacel®, Vaxelis®
Tdap	Children 7+, teens, adults, pregnant women	Boostrix®, Adacel®

When Should Children Get Vaccinated?

DTaP Schedule

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

Tdap Schedule

- 11–12 years
- Every pregnancy (27–36 weeks)
- Adults every 10 years

Benefits of Vaccination

- 98% protection within a year of completing the DTaP series
- Reduces severity even if infection occurs
- Protects newborns when pregnant women get vaccinated
- Prevents spread to vulnerable family members

Possible Vaccine Side Effects

Most side effects are mild and temporary

- **DTaP:** Soreness, fever, fussiness, tiredness, vomiting
- **Tdap:** Pain and swelling at the injection site, mild fever, headache, nausea

Severe allergic reactions are rare. Report any concerns to your healthcare provider or VAERS.

Cost Concerns?

The CDC Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program provides free vaccines to eligible children. No child needs to miss out on life-saving protection because of cost. For more information, visit [cdc.gov/vaccines-for-children/](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines-for-children/).

Need Help?

Find your local health department for vaccine access on the CDC Health Department Directory.

For more information on whooping cough, visit [mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/whooping-cough/](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/whooping-cough/).