

# Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

## What parents need to know

### What is whooping cough?

- Whooping cough (pertussis) is a disease that infects the airways and lungs.
- Whooping cough has been spreading throughout Vermont.
- Both children and adults can become sick with this disease.
- Infants and unvaccinated children are at higher risk of serious illness.
- Vaccination is the best protection against serious illness but it is possible for vaccinated people to get whooping cough.



### When should you wonder if your child has whooping cough?

The symptoms are similar to the common cold, and include coughing, sneezing and runny nose.

What makes whooping cough different is the cough—it can get worse after a week or two.

#### Symptoms of possible whooping cough:

- Coughing that lasts for more than one week
- Coughing episodes that become more frequent and more severe over time
- Intense coughing followed by a high-pitched whooping sound
- Gagging and vomiting after coughing spells
- Coughing that is worse at night
- The person may look and feel healthy between coughing episodes

### How to prevent the spread of whooping cough

**1 shot of Tdap for pregnant women during each pregnancy.**

**Every person who is older than 2 months of age should get vaccinated.**

- **1 shot of DTaP** (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis) should be given to babies at 2, 4, 6, 15–18 months, with an additional dose at age 4–6 years (for a total of 5 shots).
- **1 shot of Tdap** (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) for anybody age 11 or older especially those who will be around babies. This includes parents, grandparents, siblings and caregivers of babies.

**Wash hands frequently.**

**Teach children to cough and sneeze into their elbow (not hands).**

**Whenever possible, keep infants away from people with a cough.**

**Keep children home when sick with fever, cough, vomiting and/or diarrhea.**