



Communicable Diseases

WHOOPING COUGH (Pertussis)

What is Whooping Cough?

- Caused by the bacteria “Bordetella Pertussis”.
- Whooping cough is a highly contagious disease marked by severe coughing. It is named after the ‘whoop’ sound made when trying to breathe in during or after a severe coughing spell.

What are the symptoms of Whooping Cough?

- Whooping Cough usually starts with cold or flu like symptoms (runny nose, sneezing, and fever) followed by episodes of severe coughing that can last 1-2 months.
- Vomiting, gagging and choking may occur after severe coughing spells.

What are the complications of Whooping Cough?

- Whooping Cough is most dangerous to infants less than 1 year old.
- Complications may include weight loss, breathing problems, pneumonia, convulsions and rarely, brain damage or death.

How do you get Whooping Cough?

- Whooping Cough is spread through droplets from the mouth and nose when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
- A person may get Whooping Cough from someone who is infected but does not yet know it.
- Infected persons, not on antibiotics, may spread the disease for up to three weeks after their symptoms have begun.
- Unimmunized or inadequately immunized people are at higher risk for severe disease.

Quick Facts on Whooping Cough (Pertussis):

- Caused by a bacteria.
- Causes severe coughing spells.
- People can be immunized to help prevent Whooping Cough.

How do you treat Whooping Cough?

- See your doctor.
- Whooping Cough is treated with antibiotics and patients are advised to take all prescribed medication and avoid contact with infants, small children and pregnant women.
- Persons being treated with antibiotics are no longer contagious after five days of treatment.
- Antibiotics stop the person from spreading whooping cough, but the cough can continue for many weeks.

How can you help prevent Whooping Cough?

- Whooping Cough is still common in Saskatchewan, and there have been many outbreaks in recent years.
- Your child should be immunized against Whooping Cough at 2, 4, 6, 18 months, 4 years of age and in Grade 8.
- Adults are eligible to receive one dose of Tdap(Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) vaccine when due for a tetanus and diphtheria booster.
- Tdap vaccine is offered to women after giving birth as well as parents and caregivers of infants under 6 months of age who have not had an adult dose of Tdap.
- If you live or have close contact with someone who has Whooping Cough you may need to take antibiotics to prevent you from getting the disease—contact your health care provider.
- See your health care provider if anyone in your household has a cough lasting longer than a week. It’s important to get an accurate diagnosis and treatment.
- Persons with any cough or illness should avoid contact with infants and pregnant women; this includes visiting the labour and delivery and nursery areas of hospitals and in child care settings.

**For more information contact your
Doctor / Nurse Practitioner or
call Public Health at
306-765-6500**