



PERTUSSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH)

WHAT IS PERTUSSIS?

PERTUSSIS, OR WHOOPING COUGH, IS A HIGHLY INFECTIOUS DISEASE OF THE RESPIRATORY TRACT. IT IS CAUSED BY A BACTERIUM THAT IS FOUND IN THE MOUTH, NOSE AND THROAT OF AN INFECTED PERSON.

WHO GETS PERTUSSIS?

PERTUSSIS CAN OCCUR AT ANY AGE. MOST OF THE CASES OCCUR IN CHILDREN UNDER FIVE YEARS; THE NUMBER OF CASES IN ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS IS INCREASING.

HOW IS PERTUSSIS SPREAD?

PERTUSSIS IS SPREAD BY DIRECT CONTACT WITH DISCHARGES FROM THE NOSE AND THROAT OF INFECTED INDIVIDUALS. SOMETIMES, OLDER SIBLINGS THAT HAVE THE BACTERIA IN THEIR NOSE AND THROAT CAN BRING THE DISEASE HOME AND INFECT AN INFANT IN THE HOUSEHOLD.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF PERTUSSIS?

PERTUSSIS BEGINS AS A MILD UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION. SYMPTOMS ARE SIMILAR TO THE COMMON COLD, INCLUDING SNEEZING, RUNNY NOSE, FEVER AND A MILD COUGH. WITHIN TWO WEEKS, THE COUGH BECOMES MORE SEVERE. THE COUGHING OFTEN OCCURS IN FITS, CAUSING THE PERSON TO GAG, VOMIT, TURN BLUE, OR GASP FOR AIR IN A WAY THAT CAUSES THE WHOOPING NOISE AS THEY BREATHE IN. A THICK, CLEAR MUCOUS MAY BE DISCHARGED.

HOW SOON AFTER INFECTION DO SYMPTOMS APPEAR?

SYMPTOMS APPEAR 5 TO 10 DAYS AFTER INFECTION, BUT MAY BE AS LONG AS 3 WEEKS.

WHEN AND FOR HOW LONG IS A PERSON ABLE TO SPREAD PERTUSSIS?

A PERSON CAN SPREAD PERTUSSIS ONCE SYMPTOMS APPEAR TO THREE WEEKS AFTER THE ONSET OF COUGHING EPISODES.

DOES PAST INFECTION WITH PERTUSSIS MAKE A PERSON IMMUNE?

ONCE YOU GET THE ILLNESS, YOU USUALLY CANNOT GET IT AGAIN WITHIN THE SAME OUTBREAK. HOWEVER, SHOULD YOU BE EXPOSED YEARS LATER, YOU CAN GET THE ILLNESS AGAIN.

WHAT ARE THE COMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH PERTUSSIS?

PERTUSSIS CAN TURN INTO PNEUMONIA, MIDDLE EAR INFECTIONS, A LOSS OF APPETITE, DEHYDRATION, SEIZURES, DISORDERS OF THE BRAIN, AND DEATH.

WHAT IS THE VACCINE FOR PERTUSSIS?

DTAP (DIPHTHERIA, TETANUS, AND ACELLULAR PERTUSSIS) VACCINE IS GIVEN TO CHILDREN BETWEEN 2 MONTHS AND 7 YEARS OF AGE. SINCE PROTECTION FROM CHILDHOOD VACCINES DISAPPEARS BY THE TIME A CHILD REACHES ADOLESCENCES, TDAP (TETANUS, DIPHTHERIA, AND ACELLULAR PERTUSSIS) VACCINE IS A BOOSTER GIVEN TO INDIVIDUALS BETWEEN 11 TO 18 YEARS OF AGE.