

Whooping cough

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What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is a highly infectious bacterial disease of the respiratory tract and is spread by coughs and sneezes. Whooping cough has the highest incidence in infants. School age children are often the source of infection for younger siblings.

Symptoms

Whooping cough begins with symptoms similar to a common cold:

- dry,irritating cough
- runny or blocked nose
- sneezing
- watering eyes
- sore throat
- slightly raised temperature
- feeling generally unwell.

After several days the cough becomes worse with bouts of intense coughing. During this stage there is an increased effort when breathing in, causing the whooping sound.

Treatment

The bacteria which causes whooping cough can be treated by antibiotics. However, once the bouts of coughing have started, treatment with antibiotics has little impact on the time it takes to recover.

However, a course of antibiotics is still usually given if the disease is diagnosed in the first few weeks of the illness. This is because after five days of antibiotics your child is no longer infectious. Without antibiotics, your child can remain infectious for about three weeks after the bouts of coughing start.

Most children make a full recovery.

There are some complications associated with whooping cough, the main one being the risk of developing a chest infection. For this your child would be prescribed antibiotics and will be treated in isolation on the children's ward to prevent the whooping cough from spreading to other young babies and children. If your baby/child needs additional help with breathing oxygen may be given, especially when coughing, to help them recover.

How to avoid passing on whooping cough

Whooping cough is highly infectious so if your child has it you must keep them away from others until they have completed a five day course of the antibiotics.

Can whooping cough be prevented?

Immunisation. The number of cases of whooping cough has fallen dramatically since immunisations were introduced in the UK in the 1950s. Immunisation is routinely offered to all children, as part of the triple vaccine. Three doses are usually given at age two, three and four months and then a pre-school booster at ages three to five years. Immunisation is good but not 100% effective. This is why some immunised children still get whooping cough. Also the effect of the immunisation may reduce

over the years. This is the reason why some older children and adults develop whooping cough who were immunised as a young child.

Preventative treatment may be recommended for those that may live with your child such as:

- newborn babies
- young children under the age of 12 months who have not
- received the complete course of the DTaP/IPV/Hib vaccine
- children under the age of 10 who have not been vaccinated
- women in the last month of pregnancy
- those with a weakened immune system, such as people with
- HIV or people undergoing chemotherapy
- those with a long-term health condition such as asthma or
- heart failure.

Preventative treatment usually involves a short course of antibiotics or a booster dose of the vaccine.

If you are worried about your child following discharge please take them to your GP or A&E, if you have any queries/ questions please contact Ward 10 on 01493 452010

Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible. Please talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/ department staff are unable to resolve your concern, please ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care. **Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.** Providing your feedback is vital in helping to transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

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The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

For a large print version of this leaflet, contact PALS 01493 453240