



Public Health
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Pertussis fact sheet

What is pertussis?

Pertussis is a highly contagious disease that is spread through the air by coughing. Pertussis usually begins with cold-like symptoms and a cough that worsens over 1-2 weeks. Symptoms may include coughing “fits” followed by a “whooping” noise, vomiting, cyanosis (turning blue) or the inability to catch one’s breath. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help eliminate the cough. Usually, persons infected with pertussis do not have a fever.

Adults and children may catch pertussis, **even if they have had all or some of their immunizations (DTaP)**. In older children and adults the symptoms may be only a persistent cough which is worse at night. This illness is often very severe in small infants.

What if I am exposed to a person with pertussis?

Persons who are exposed to pertussis can lower the risk of becoming ill by taking antibiotics prescribed by their health care provider. Persons who are already ill after being exposed to someone with pertussis can take antibiotics to recover more quickly and to reduce the risk of spreading pertussis to others.

Clark County Public Health recommendations:

Close contacts of the ill person are those who were within 6 feet of the ill person for 1 hour or longer during the time he/she was infectious.

1. If you have an infant who was exposed as described above and who develops a cold or coughing illness after exposure to the ill person please, have your infant evaluated ***promptly*** by their doctor for pertussis infection.
2. If you have a child under the age of 1 year who was exposed as described above please speak with your doctor about getting antibiotics for your child even if your child does not have any cold symptoms. This is done to prevent an exposed person from developing the illness.
3. If you are a woman in the third trimester of pregnancy and were exposed as described above please speak with your doctor about getting antibiotics for yourself to prevent the development of illness even if you do not have any cold symptoms.
4. If you live in the same household as the ill person and there is a child under the age of 1 year or a pregnant woman in her third trimester who is also a member of the household

please speak with your doctor about getting antibiotics for yourself to prevent the development of illness even if you do not have any cold symptoms.

5. Please make sure that you are current on all of your pertussis vaccinations whether or not you were exposed to the ill child. Exposed children who received their third dose of DTaP vaccine 6 months or more before exposure to pertussis should be given a 4th dose at this time. Children who have had 4 doses of pertussis vaccine should receive a booster DTaP unless a dose has been given within the last 3 years or they are 7 year of age or older. Adolescents over age 11 who have not received Tdap vaccine should get it at this time. Those over age 11 who received a Td booster should receive Tdap if a 5 yr interval has elapsed. Tdap may be given at an interval of less than 5 years if the benefits of protection outweigh the risk of an adverse reaction.

Pertussis vaccines are recommended for both children and adults.

If you have questions please call, your health care provider or the Clark County Health Department at (360) 397-8182 and thank you for your attention.