



CLARK COUNTY  
WASHINGTON

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## Pertussis (whooping cough) fact sheet

### What is pertussis?

Pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory 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 difficulty catching one’s breath. The cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not eliminate the cough. People with pertussis usually do not have a fever. In older children and adults, symptoms may be limited to a cough that lasts a long time and is worse at night. This illness is often very severe in small infants and can lead to hospitalization and death. Pregnant women who become infected during their third trimester are at risk of passing the illness on to their newborns after birth.

### Pertussis vaccine

Pertussis vaccines are recommended for both children and adults. Although adults and children may catch pertussis even if they have had all or some of their vaccinations, **vaccination against pertussis is still the best way to reduce the risk of getting this disease.** Clark County Public Health urges parents to ensure their families are up-to-date with vaccinations that protect against pertussis and other diseases. Healthcare providers and other adults should ensure they have had a one-time dose of Tdap (combined tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) vaccine. For information on low- and no-cost vaccine, please refer to our website at <http://www.clark.wa.gov/wa/giv/public-health/care/index.html>. Contact your healthcare provider to see if you qualify for low-cost vaccine.

### What if I am exposed to a person with pertussis?

Persons who are exposed to a confirmed case of pertussis can lower the risk of becoming ill by taking antibiotics prescribed by their health care provider. See recommendations below of who should take antibiotics. Those who are already ill with pertussis can take antibiotics to recover more quickly and to reduce the risk of spreading pertussis to others. Children and adults who are being treated for pertussis should avoid contact with others by staying at home **until five days of antibiotics are completed.**

### 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. Tell the provider that your child was exposed to another individual with pertussis.
2. If you have a child under the age of 1 year who was exposed as described above please speak with your healthcare provider about getting antibiotics for your child even if your child does not have any cold symptoms or has been previously vaccinated. This is done to prevent an exposed person from developing the illness.
3. If you are pregnant in the third trimester and believe you were exposed to someone with pertussis, ask your healthcare provider about getting antibiotics to prevent becoming ill. This action is important even if you do not have any symptoms or have been previously vaccinated. Antibiotics must be taken as soon as possible after pertussis exposure to reduce the chance of exposing your newborn infant to the illness.
4. If you live in the same household as a person who is diagnosed with pertussis, speak with your healthcare provider about getting antibiotics to prevent becoming ill, even if you have been previously vaccinated.
5. Review your vaccination records.
  - Please make sure that you and your children are current on pertussis vaccinations whether or not you were exposed to an ill person.
  - Exposed children who received their third dose of DTaP (combined diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine for children under age 7 years old) 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 years of age or older. For children aged 7 through 10 years who are not fully immunized with the childhood DTaP vaccine series, Tdap vaccine should be substituted for a single dose of Td (tetanus, diphtheria) vaccine in the catch-up series. Adolescents age 11 and older who have not received Tdap should get a single dose at this time. Those age 11 or over who received a Td booster should receive Tdap regardless of the interval since the last Td or DTaP was given. Likewise, adults who have never received Tdap should receive Tdap regardless of the interval since their last Td.

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



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**Voice** (360) 397-2322, **Relay** 711 or (800) 833-6388,  
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