



Parents can protect their babies from Whooping Cough

Is whooping cough just a bad cough?

No, it is more than that. It is a bacterial infection in the breathing system – the respiratory system. This is what you need to know:

- A doctor or nurse may call it pertussis.
- It is very easy to catch. It is passed on from coughing, sneezing, or being near anyone who has the germ.

How do I know if someone has it?

- At first it looks like a bad cold. The person sneezes and gets a runny nose, a fever, and a cough.
- The person starts to have bad coughing spells. Before the next breath they make a whooping sound. They often throw up after a coughing spell.
- The cough can last up to two months. The person may find it hard to breathe.

Do babies have the same symptoms?

A baby's symptoms may start like a bad cold. They may have a low fever, or no fever. Watch for these symptoms:

- They gag or gasp but may not cough very much.
- They stop breathing sometimes.

How serious is whooping cough for my baby?

It is serious for all young children and even more serious for new babies. Children may get very sick. The sickness may also lead to problems like these:

- pneumonia
- convulsions or seizures
- brain damage that is permanent
- stopping breathing

A new baby can die from whooping cough.



How do I protect myself and my baby?

You can have the germ for whooping cough and not know it. You may give it to your baby if you have it. Check with your health care provider to find out if you and your family's vaccines are up to date.

- **Mothers:** If your vaccines are not up to date, you can protect your baby by getting vaccinated for whooping cough as soon as possible. If you are pregnant, you can safely get vaccinated for whooping cough on or after 26 weeks of pregnancy.
- **Fathers and anyone who takes care** of the baby can get a vaccine before the baby is born if their vaccines are not up to date.
- **The baby's sisters and brothers** can get a vaccine if their vaccines are not up to date.

Getting your baby's vaccines on time is the best way to protect your baby. The whooping cough vaccine is free for children and adults in Nova Scotia.

You get the vaccine as a needle in the upper part of your arm. Any side effects from the needle are mild: your arm may swell up or get sore and red where the needle went in. None of the side effects will stop you from looking after your baby.

When should I see a doctor or nurse practitioner?

If you or your baby feel sick and have symptoms of whooping cough, particularly if you have been around someone who may have whooping cough.

It is usually easier to get rid of whooping cough when you treat it right away. The risk of getting other problems is also lower.