



Make sure your child is up-to-date on whooping cough vaccine

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Whooping cough, or pertussis, is a respiratory infection that spreads easily. The infection can be serious, especially for babies.

A main sign of the illness is strong coughing. Between coughs, children take deep, fast breaths. This can create a high-pitched “whooping” sound that gives the illness its name. The cough can last for months.

Whooping cough is caused by bacteria called *Bordetella pertussis*, which attacks the lining of the breathing passages.

The number of whooping cough cases in the U.S. this year is at least five times higher than in 2023. Outbreaks among adolescents have been reported in schools in several states. People can get whooping cough any time of year but mostly in late summer and fall.

In children, whooping cough usually starts out like a common cold and then gets worse after a week or two. Children also may be short of breath, have bluish or gray skin around their mouth and may tear, drool or vomit.

The best way to protect your child from severe symptoms is with the vaccine and booster shot.

Young children should get the vaccine at 2 months, 4 months and 6 months of age, and at 12-18 months and 4 or 5 years of age before they start school. Children also should get a booster shot when they are 11 or 12 years old. Talk to your pediatrician to schedule vaccination.

Parents, family members and caregivers who will be in close contact with babies younger than 1 year should get a booster shot. This lowers the chance of passing the infection to the infant. Women who are pregnant should get the vaccine during the third trimester. Getting the vaccine during each pregnancy provides short-term protection to the baby.

Contact your pediatrician if you have concerns, such as:

- Your infant or child has not been fully immunized and/or has been exposed to someone with whooping cough or who has a chronic cough.
- Your child's cough becomes more severe and frequent.
- Your child is struggling to breathe or the child's lips and fingertips become blue or gray.
- The child is exhausted after coughing, is not eating, vomits after coughing and looks sick.

For more information about whooping cough, visit HealthyChildren.org at <https://bit.ly/3NUYptE>.

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