

Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

WANT MORE INFORMATION? CHECK OUT THE
WEB SITES & VIDEO LISTED BELOW...

- www.cdc.gov/pertussis/
- www.soundsofpertussis.com
- http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/bacterial_viral/whooping_cough.html
- Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5SHtdczSBc>

This report was compiled by Ammonoosuc Community Health Services, Inc. (ACHS) clinical staff for informational purposes, and does not replace any advice one might receive from a qualified health care provider.

Founded in 1975, Ammonoosuc Community Health Services is a nonprofit community health center offering a network of quality, affordable primary health services. Our programs promote and support the well-being of individuals and families by emphasizing preventive care and encouraging active participation in one's own health. ACHS serves 26 towns in northern Grafton and southern Coos counties and has sites located in Littleton, Franconia, Whitefield, Warren and Woodsville. We provide comprehensive services, regardless of one's ability to pay, to nearly 10,000 patients.



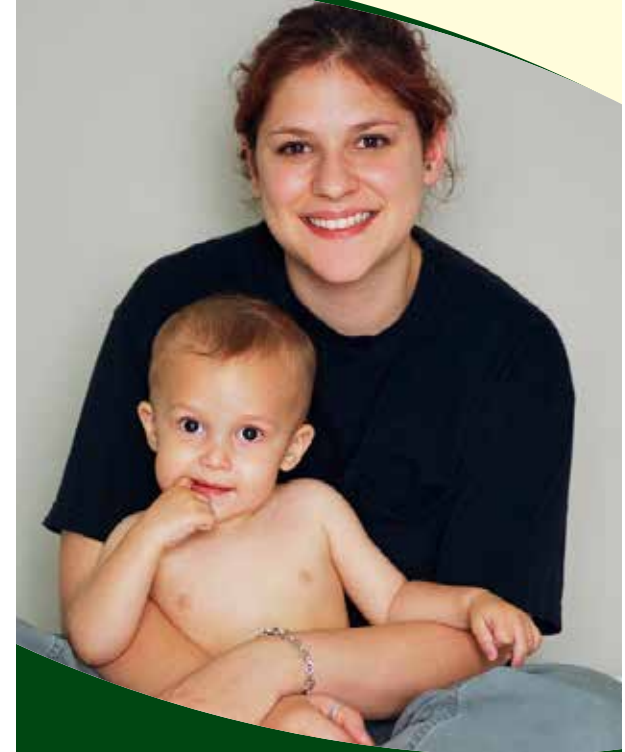
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New Patient hotline at 1.866.201.5076

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*Learn how to protect yourself
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**Ammonoosuc
Community Health Services, Inc.**

.....
Littleton • Franconia • Warren • Whitefield • Woodsville

Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

Whooping cough (pertussis) is on the rise in our communities. Learn what you can do to protect yourself and your family from getting this contagious disease.

Whooping cough spreads easily and can cause violent coughing fits that can last up to 10 weeks or more. It can be quite severe, even deadly, especially in babies younger than 6 months of age who are too young to be well protected by vaccines. We can help protect our babies by getting the Tdap vaccine ourselves, a shot that renews protection against whooping cough, as it is often spread to babies by adults and older children.

WHAT IS PERTUSSIS?

Pertussis is a respiratory illness, commonly known as whooping cough. It is a very contagious disease caused by a type of bacteria called *Bordetella pertussis*.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF PERTUSSIS?

The disease usually starts with cold-like symptoms, a mild cough or fever. As it worsens, pertussis can cause violent and rapid coughing, over and over, until the air is gone from the lungs and you're forced to inhale with a loud "whooping" sound.

Younger patients have a greater chance of complications from pertussis than older persons. More than half of the infants who get

the disease need to be cared for in the hospital and about one out of five will get pneumonia. Infants are also more likely to suffer from seizures or brain damage from lack of oxygen.

HOW IS PERTUSSIS SPREAD?

Pertussis is a very contagious disease and is spread from person to person. People with pertussis usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria.

Many infants who get pertussis are infected by older siblings, parents or caregivers who might not even know they have the disease.

HOW CAN PERTUSSIS BE PREVENTED?

Pertussis vaccines are safe and very effective at preventing illness. However, infants are not fully immunized until they are a year old. Because whooping cough is so harmful for babies, everyone around them needs to be vaccinated to create a "circle of protection".

The Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis) vaccine is recommended for all adults, especially parents, grandparents and babysitters at least two weeks before coming into close contact

with the infant to be sure they are protected. No vaccine is 100% effective, though, and so if pertussis is circulating in the community, there is a chance that a fully vaccinated person of any age, can catch this very contagious disease. However, if you get pertussis after you have been vaccinated, the infection is often less severe.

Once a person is diagnosed with Pertussis, it is usually successfully treated with antibiotics.

HOW SHOULD PARENTS-TO-BE PROTECT THEMSELVES AND THEIR UNBORN CHILD?

Pregnant women should get the Tdap vaccine, later in pregnancy to maximize the amount of protection that is passed along to the newborn. If not vaccinated during pregnancy, the vaccine should be administered immediately postpartum before leaving the hospital with a newborn. By getting Tdap during pregnancy, maternal pertussis antibodies transfer to the newborn, providing protection before the baby starts receiving DTaP vaccines. Tdap also protects the mother at time of delivery, making her less likely to transmit pertussis to her infant.