



# PERTUSSIS IS SERIOUS

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### What is Pertussis?

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a highly contagious, vaccine-preventable respiratory disease that can be passed easily from person-to-person. Pertussis is caused by a bacteria found in the mouth, nose and throat of an infected person and is spread when that person coughs, sneezes or talks. Pertussis is a year-round disease that peaks in the fall and winter during cold and flu season.

### What are the symptoms?

Pertussis usually starts with cold and flu-like symptoms; and after about two weeks the cough becomes more severe. Pertussis is known for uncontrollable coughing which can make it hard to breathe. After a coughing episode, someone with pertussis needs to take deep breaths which often times can result in a “whooping” sound and commonly vomits and feels very tired. Between episodes, there may be no signs of illness. Pertussis can last for weeks and even months if not treated early.

### How do we prevent it?

The best way to protect against pertussis is immunization.

### Who should get the Pertussis vaccine?

**Infants and Children:** The recommended pertussis vaccine for children is called DTaP. For maximum protection against pertussis, children need five DTaP shots.

- The first three shots are given at 2, 4, and 6 months of age.
- The fourth shot is given at 15 through 18 months of age.
- The fifth shot (booster dose) is given when a child enters school, at 4 through 6 years of age.

**11 years through Adulthood:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a single booster (Tdap) for 11 year olds through adulthood and especially for those who are in close contact with a baby, including parents, siblings, grandparents and caregivers. Tdap is required for students beginning in the eighth grade.

**Pregnant Women:** Pregnant women should receive a Tdap during each pregnancy, regardless of previous history of receiving Tdap. Ideally, the vaccine should be given between 27 and 36 weeks of pregnancy, however it may be given at any time during the pregnancy. A woman who did not receive a dose of Tdap during her pregnancy should get a dose of Tdap immediately post-partum. Tdap will protect the mother at the time of delivery, making her less likely to transmit pertussis to her infant.

**Protect yourself and others around you by getting a pertussis vaccine!**

