FOR PATIENTS

Vaccine-Preventable Diseases in Adults
Pertussis (Whooping Cough)



What is whooping cough?[1,2]

- Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a **very contagious** respiratory infection caused by a bacteria that can result in coughing fits
- In earlier stages, whooping cough causes symptoms similar to the common cold, making it **difficult to suspect and diagnose** until more severe symptoms occur
- One to two weeks after symptoms first start, symptoms of whooping cough may include **rapid, violent, and uncontrolled coughing fits** that usually last 1 to 6 weeks but can last up to 10 weeks

What complications can whooping cough cause in adults?[3]

While whooping cough is often less severe in adults than babies, in some cases it can lead to serious complications. Some of the most common **complications among others, in adults** are:

- Weight loss
- Loss of bladder control
- Fainting or passing out
- Bruised or fractured ribs from severe coughing fits

Did you know?

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis) vaccination for adolescents and adults. This is in addition to the vaccinations against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis, which they should have received as babies and children[4]
- All adults who have never received one should get a Tdap shot. This can be given at any time, regardless of when they last received a Td (tetanus and diphtheria) shot. This should be followed by either a Td or Tdap shot every 10 years[4]
- The CDC also recommends that women get a Tdap vaccination during the early part of the 3rd trimester (optimally between 27 and 36 weeks of gestation) of every pregnancy to help protect her baby from whooping cough in the first few months of life[5]
- A Tdap vaccine can be given with other vaccines during the same visit[6]

Ask your healthcare provider how you can stay up to date on Tdap vaccination so you can help protect yourself from whooping cough

References: 1. Pertussis (whooping cough): About whooping cough. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reviewed April 2, 2024. Accessed June 2, 2025. https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/about/index.html **2.** Pertussis (whooping cough): Symptoms of whooping cough. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reviewed April 2, 2024. Accessed June 2, 2025. https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/signs-symptoms/ **3.** Pertussis (whooping cough). In: Red Book: 2024–2027 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases. American Academy of Pediatrics. Kimberlin DW, Banerjee R, Barnet ED, et al., eds. 33rd ed. Elk Grove Village, IL. 2025. https://publications.aap.org/redbook/book/755/chapter-abstract/14080319/Pertussis-Whooping-Cough **4.** Pertussis (whooping cough): Pertussis vaccination recommendations. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reviewed October 31, 2024. Accessed June 2, 2025. https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/hcp/vaccine-recommendations/index.html **5.** Pertussis (whooping cough): Vaccinating pregnant patients. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reviewed October 31, 2024. Accessed June 2, 2025. https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/hcp/vaccine-recommendations/vaccinating-pregnant-patients.html **6.** Pertussis (whooping cough): Administering diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis vaccines. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reviewed September 6, 2022. Accessed June 2, 2025. https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/dtap-tdap-td/hcp/administering-vaccine.html

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