

# Recognizing and Preventing Whooping Cough

*[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

Whooping cough is a serious disease that vaccines can help prevent. It was thought to be a disease of the past, but it's making a comeback, with the most cases CDC has seen in 60 years. Since 2010, between 10,000 and 50,000 cases of whooping cough are reported each year in the United States.

This highly contagious disease can be *very* serious for babies. About half of babies younger than one who get whooping cough end up in the hospital; sometimes they even die. The disease doesn't just affect babies; children and adults can have serious cases of whooping cough, too. The disease often starts with cold-like symptoms and a cough. Unlike a cold, someone with whooping cough may have a cough that lasts for weeks or months. They can cough violently and rapidly, over and over—gasping for air between bouts of coughing; this is what makes the 'whooping' sound. But many babies don't cough; instead, whooping cough can cause them to stop breathing. *Any* breathing problem in a baby or child is serious, and you should call your health care provider or go to an emergency department right away. There are antibiotics to treat whooping cough, but they need to be started early to be most effective.

Vaccines can provide protection against whooping cough and this protection can start before birth. By getting the whooping cough vaccine, known as Tdap, during the third trimester of each pregnancy, women can pass antibodies to their babies so they're born with protection. These maternal antibodies protect babies until they're old enough to get their own vaccine.

Children get the vaccine known as DTaP in a series of five shots, starting at two months and ending with a booster shot before elementary school. Preteens should get a Tdap booster shot at 11 or 12 years of age. Anyone who didn't get the vaccine as a preteen is also recommended to get one dose of Tdap.

If you're pregnant, talk with your doctor or midwife about getting the whooping cough vaccine during your third trimester. Also, encourage others who will have close contact with your baby to make sure they are up-to-date with their whooping cough vaccine. If someone needs a whooping cough vaccine, they should get it at least two weeks before coming in close contact with a new baby. Do your part to protect yourself and your family from whooping cough.

To learn more, visit [cdc.gov/pertussis](https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis). That's pertussis—p-e-r-t-u-s-s-i-s.

*[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.*