

Facts about Whooping Cough

Bordetella Pertussis is also known as whooping cough. It is an infectious disease transmitted by coughing or sneezing and is highly contagious. The bacterium affects the throat and lungs. In Indiana, there has been an increase in Pertussis (Whooping Cough) reported.

The incubation period for the whooping cough is 7-10 days with a range of 4-21 days, but can be as long as 42 days. (Epidemiology & Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases). There are three stages to whooping cough.

The first stage last 1-2 weeks and is called the catarrhal stage. In this stage the individual is the most contagious. This stage is characterized by a runny nose, low grade fever, sneezing and a mild occasional cough that gradually gets worse over the days.

The second stage is the paroxysmal coughing stage. This stage can last 1-6 weeks. It is during this time it is usually suspected by a physician or health care provider. An individual will exhibit with numerous rapid coughs that expel thick mucus. An individual on average will have 15 attacks per 24 hours or more. This stage can last 2-3 weeks then decreasing in intensity over weeks.

The third stage is the convalescence of the individual. This could last weeks to months depending on the severity of the disease. The cough weakens in children and older adults. Pertussis is usually milder in older adults but who can easily affect the younger children and infants. Medical management of

antibiotics helps with shortening the disease process. It is also very important that close contacts receive prophylaxis medication if not immunized recently.

There can be complications after contracting Pertussis. Complications can include pneumonia, seizures, brain problems, even death can occur. This is especially true in our younger populations. Infants and small children are at most risk of the disease. An infant's schedule for Pertussis prevention in a combination shot is 2, 4, 6, 12 months and also at school entry. **Adults should be vaccinated with Tdap at least once** except for pregnant women who are routinely vaccinated with Tdap with every pregnancy. Tdap contains a pertussis vaccine that protects the adult from transmission of pertussis to infants before the infant is old enough for vaccinations. It has been found that adults can have mild cases of Pertussis and transmit to infants who aren't fully immunized, thus making the infant very sick. Prevention of an immunization is the key to a healthy child.

If you are in need of a Tdap call your health care provider or The Health Department. Pertussis is a very preventable disease. As always, if you have any questions or comments, please eMail me at gheffelmire@dearborncounty.in.gov