

## Whooping cough

---

This leaflet is for parents and carers of children with whooping cough. It explains what the condition is, how it will affect your child and how the infection is treated. If you have any questions or concerns that are not answered in the leaflet please ask a member of nursing staff.

---

### What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough is an infection caused by a bacterium (germ) called *Bordetella pertussis*. The bacterium is spread to others by contaminated droplets in the air, produced from coughing and close contact with an affected person.

### Is it contagious?

Yes. It is very infectious in the early stages of the illness. You can pass it on to others in the household who are not immunised or (who have not had whooping cough).

### How do I know if my child has whooping cough?

The first symptom your child may have is a sore throat. Within the next few days a mild, dry cough develops. Your child will feel unwell and may have a high temperature and runny nose. Over the next few days your child's cough may become more productive with some sputum (phlegm).

After 10-14 days from the start of the illness the cough may become worse and your child will have bouts of intense coughing which can last between 1-2 minutes. It is not uncommon to vomit after coughing.

Your child may have several bouts of coughing throughout the day ranging from 12 times in a day and up to 100 times in a day.

### Who gets whooping cough?

Anyone of any age can get whooping cough, especially children and adults who have not been immunised. Also, some adults who have been immunised can still get whooping cough as the vaccine can lose its efficacy in some people.

## What is the treatment for whooping cough?

Your child may be put on antibiotics, which kills the bacterium that causes whooping cough. The antibiotics will not lessen the duration of the illness. Without the antibiotics your child can be infectious for up to three weeks after the bouts of coughing start.

## Can whooping cough be prevented?

In the UK immunisation against whooping cough is offered routinely to all children. It is part of a triple vaccine. Three doses are usually given at the ages of 2, 3, and 4 months and then a preschool booster at ages 3-5 years.

In order to protect young babies from becoming infected from whooping cough, a programme offering a vaccination to pregnant women started in 2012.

## Further information

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/whooping-cough/pages/introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/whooping-cough/pages/introduction.aspx)

More information is available on the Trust website: [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

*Information in this leaflet is based upon patient.co.uk, September 2012*

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust  
London Road, Reading RG1 5AN  
0118 322 5111 (switchboard)

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

PAED\_295

Jacqueline Evans, Paediatric Emergency Department, May 2014

Reviewed: Tony Knox April 2017

Review due: April 2019