

WHOOPING COUGH:

What you need to know

Whooping Cough, also known as pertussis, is in *your community*.

Whooping Cough can be *fatal*.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports the number of cases could reach the *highest level in more than 50 years*.

The best prevention measure is for children, adolescents and adults to *get vaccinated*:

Tdap for everyone 11 years and older, including pregnant women

DTaP for children 2 months through 6 years

ABOUT THE DISEASE

The disease starts like the common cold, with a runny nose or congestion, sneezing, mild cough and/or fever. After one to two weeks, severe coughing begins.

The Chinese call this terrible disease the 100-day cough: a very accurate description.

Infants and children with the disease cough violently and rapidly, over and over, until the air is gone from their lungs and they are forced to inhale with a loud “whooping” sound. Some infants and adults don’t have the characteristic “whoop.”

People with pertussis usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria. A five-day course of antibiotics makes a person no longer contagious.

Unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated infants younger than 12 months of age have the highest risk for severe and life-threatening complications and death. More than half of infants younger than 1 year of age who get the disease must be hospitalized. In fact, over 90% of deaths related to whooping cough are in infants younger than 6 months of age. Infants need to be surrounded by vaccinated individuals – to make a circle of protection.

PREVENTION

The best way to prevent whooping cough is simple: **children, adolescents and adults need to get vaccinated.** The recommended vaccine for children is called DTaP. This is a safe and effective combination vaccine that protects children against three diseases: diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. Vaccine protection for these diseases can fade with time. Therefore, it is important for adolescents and adults to get a booster called Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis). Learn more at www.frannystrong.org.

