



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Our vision: Together with the communities we serve, we are working to make Weld County the healthiest place to live, learn, work and play.

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Facts

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) is highly contagious.

- Pertussis is a respiratory infection caused by bacteria that are spread when someone with the illness coughs or sneezes on someone else or shares food, drinks, eating utensils or kisses someone.

Infants and young children are at the greatest risk.

- Pertussis can infect persons of all ages, but is most serious in infants and young children.
- Hospitalization, seizures, long-term neurological problems, and even death may occur in infants and young children.

Symptoms of Pertussis look a lot like the common cold at first.

- Runny nose, nasal congestion, sneezing, watery eyes, mild fever, and dry cough.
- Within two weeks, symptoms worsen and a severe cough develops, which may:
 - Cause coughing “fits”, making it difficult to breathe. But may feel fine between coughing fits.
 - Be more severe at night interfering with sleep.
 - Bring up thick phlegm.
 - Cause vomiting after a coughing fit.
 - End with a high-pitched ‘whoop’ sound when breathing in after a series of coughs (this is most common among young children).
- Some of these symptoms may be absent or less severe in adults and those previously immunized

The best way to prevent Pertussis is to be up-to-date on Pertussis immunizations.

- Infants who are too young to be fully immunized can be protected if adults and other children who are in contact with them have been immunized. Children should receive the Pertussis-containing vaccine series beginning at 2 months of age, and routinely complete 5 vaccinations before starting school.
- By adolescence, immunity from the pre-school vaccination series begins to wane. Adolescents should receive a one-time dose of tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine at age 11 or 12.
- Adults 19 years and older who have not previously received Tdap vaccine should also receive a single dose of Tdap.
- Pertussis vaccines are very effective but not 100% effective. Some immunized children and adults will still get Pertussis but usually a much milder case.

Other ways to prevent Pertussis, and the spread of all illness, include:

- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze with tissue or inside of elbow—not hands.
- Wash hands often, especially before eating, after blowing nose, sneezing or coughing.
- Avoid sharing any food or drinks with others.
- **Stay home when ill. Especially if waiting for Pertussis test results.**
- Contact healthcare provider if you or a family member have Pertussis symptoms or have been coughing for 2 weeks or longer.
- If diagnosed with Pertussis (whooping cough) avoid contact with others and **stay at home until you have completed 5 full days of antibiotics.**

Pertussis is treated with antibiotics.

- Antibiotics cure the infection and stop an individual from spreading the disease, the cough may continue for weeks or even months.