

Welcome to this overview of Whooping Cough, Presented by UCP Seguin of Greater Chicago's Infinitec. In this presentation, we will review the signs and symptoms of Whooping Cough, and go over the diagnosis, treatment, and complications of this infection.

Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is characterized by an uncontrollable, violent coughing which makes it difficult to breathe. After coughing, a person with pertussis often needs to take deep breaths, which results in a "whooping" sound. Pertussis most commonly affects infants under the age of six months who are too young to receive a vaccination for the illness or in adolescents whose vaccines are starting to fade.

<http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/>

Deaths associated with whooping cough are rare but most commonly occur in infants. That's why doctors encourage pregnant women — and other people who will have close contact with an infant — to be vaccinated against whooping cough.

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/whooping-cough/basics/definition/con-20023295>

Whooping cough is a highly contagious bacterial infection that is transferred from person to person through body fluids. It is usually transmitted when an infected person coughs or sneezes, causing water droplets to be sprayed through the air and breathed into the lungs of another person. Infected people are most contagious during the earliest stages of the illness for up to about 2 weeks after the cough begins. Antibiotics shorten the period of contagiousness to 5 days following the start of antibiotic treatment.

http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/bacterial_viral/whooping_cough.html#

Signs & Symptoms

Once you become infected with the pertussis infection, it can take one to two weeks for signs and symptoms to occur. They're usually mild at first and appear similar to those of a common cold.

These symptoms include:

- sneezing
- dry, occasional cough
- low-grade fever
- runny nose
- nasal congestion
- mild fever

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/whooping-cough/basics/symptoms/con-20023295>

After 1 to 2 weeks, the dry cough progresses into bouts of severe coughing. During a coughing spell, which can last for a minute or more, the individual's skin may turn a different color, such as red or purple. At the end of a spell, the individual may make a characteristic whooping sound when breathing in or may vomit. Between coughing spells, the individual often appears to feel well.

Although many individuals who become infected with pertussis will develop the characteristic coughing episodes and accompanying whoop, not all will. Adults and teens with whooping cough often have milder symptoms, such as coughing without the whoop or a cough that lasts for a longer period of time. Often, infants do not cough or whoop as older individuals might. In particularly bad spells, infants may gasp for air or may stop breathing for a few seconds during particularly bad spells.

http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/bacterial_viral/whooping_cough.html

The symptoms of pertussis can last for to 10 weeks or more in some individuals. Coughing spells generally become more common and severe as the illness continues, and can occur more often at night. Recovery often happens slowly as the cough becomes less severe and less common. However, coughing spells can return with other respiratory infections for many months after the original onset of pertussis. <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/about/signs-symptoms.html>

Treatment

To make a diagnosis, the doctor will do a thorough physical exam and take nose and throat mucus samples that will be examined and cultured for the pertussis bacteria. Blood tests and a chest X-ray may also be performed.

A confirmed case of whooping cough will be treated with antibiotics, usually for 2 weeks. Many experts believe that the medication is most effective in shortening the duration of the infection when given in the first stage of the illness, **before** coughing spells begin. However, even if antibiotics are started later, they continue to be important as they can stop the spread of the pertussis infection to others.

If hospitalization is necessary, breathing will be monitored and oxygen given as needed. Intravenous (IV) fluids might be required if a child shows signs of dehydration or has difficulty eating.

If the individual is being treated for pertussis at home, the caretaker should follow the schedule for giving antibiotics exactly as the doctor prescribed. Giving cough medicine probably will not help, as they typically are not able to relieve the coughing spells of whooping cough. During recovery, the individual should rest in bed and be exposed to a cool-mist vaporizer to help loosen respiratory secretions and soothe irritated lungs and breathing passages. Children with whooping cough may vomit or not eat or drink much because of the coughing. Smaller, more frequent meals may be necessary and the individual should be encouraged to drink lots of fluids. The individual should be monitored for signs of dehydration, including thirst, irritability, restlessness, lethargy, sunken eyes, a dry mouth and tongue, dry skin, crying without tears, reduced amounts of urination.

http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/bacterial_viral/whooping_cough.html#

Complications

Most people recover from whooping cough with no problems. When complications occur, they tend to be side effects of the strenuous coughing, such as:

- Bruised or cracked ribs
- Abdominal hernias
- Broken blood vessels in the skin or the whites of your eyes

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/whooping-cough/basics/complications/con-20023295>

Some children with whooping cough need to be treated in a hospital. Infants and younger children are more likely to be hospitalized because they are at greater risk for complications such as [pneumonia](#), which occurs in about 1 in 5 children under the age of 1 year who have pertussis. Up to 75% of infants younger than 6 months old with whooping cough will receive hospital treatment. In infants younger than 6 months of age, whooping cough can even be life threatening.

Other potential complications include ear infections, difficulty breathing, periods of apnea, and dehydration due to poor oral intake. In the most extreme cases, complications include seizure and/or brain damage

http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/bacterial_viral/whooping_cough.html#

Prevention

The best way to prevent whooping cough is with the pertussis vaccine, which doctors often give in combination with vaccines against two other serious diseases — diphtheria and tetanus. This vaccine is known as the Tdap vaccine.

http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/bacterial_viral/whooping_cough.html#

Doctors recommend beginning vaccinations during infancy. The vaccine consists of a series of five injections occurring before the child's sixth birthday. The vaccines are typically given to children at these ages:

- 2 months
- 4 months
- 6 months
- 15 to 18 months
- 4 to 6 years

Because immunity from the pertussis vaccine tends to wane by age 11, doctors recommend a booster shot at the age of 11 or 12 to protect against whooping cough (pertussis), diphtheria and tetanus.

Some varieties of the every-10-year tetanus and diphtheria vaccine also include protection against whooping cough (pertussis) for adults. In addition to protecting you against whooping cough, this vaccine will reduce the risk of your transmitting whooping cough to infants.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now recommends that pregnant women receive the pertussis vaccine between 27 weeks and 36 weeks of gestation. This may also give some protection to the infant during the first few months of life.

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/whooping-cough/basics/prevention/con-20023295>

When to Call the Doctor

Call the doctor if you suspect that your child has whooping cough or has been exposed to someone with whooping cough, even if your child has already received all scheduled pertussis immunizations.

Your child should be examined by a doctor if he or she has prolonged coughing spells, especially if these spells:

- make your child's skin or lips turn red, purple, or blue
- are followed by vomiting
- are accompanied by a whooping sound when your child breathes in after coughing
- is having difficulty breathing or seems to have brief periods of not breathing (apnea)
- is lethargic

If your child has been diagnosed with whooping cough and is being treated at home, ALWAYS seek immediate medical care if he or she has difficulty breathing or shows signs of dehydration.

http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/bacterial_viral/whooping_cough.html#

This concludes our presentation on the Pertussis, which is also known as whooping cough. Thank you for joining us. For further information, please refer to the list of referenced websites or do not hesitate to contact UCP Seguin's Infinitec at 708-444-8460.