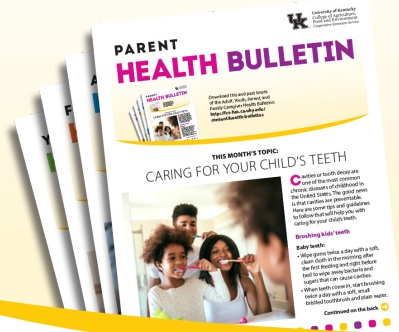


PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



JANUARY 2026

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

PREVENT THE SPREAD OF WHOOPING COUGH



Whooping cough is a sickness caused by tiny germs that live in a person's nose and throat. These germs spread very easily through the air when someone who is sick coughs or sneezes. Even though whooping cough is not common in the United States, the number of cases in Kentucky has gone up in the last few years. It happens more often during the winter because people spend more time inside and close together, which makes it easier for the germs to spread. Babies younger than 12 months are the most at risk, especially if they have not gotten all their vaccines yet.

At first, whooping cough may seem like a simple cold. A child might have a runny nose, a slight fever, and a light cough. These early signs can make the illness hard to recognize. But after

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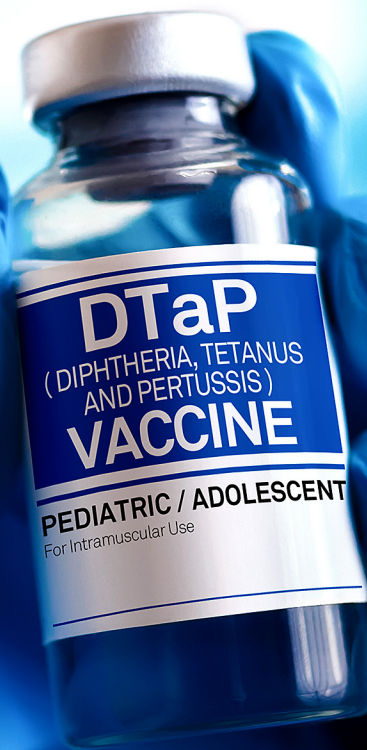
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**The best way to protect
children from whooping
cough is through vaccination.**

**Children should get the
DTaP vaccine at 2, 4,
and 6 months old.**



➔ **Continued from the previous page**

about a week, the sickness can become much more serious. The cough often turns into strong, repeated coughing fits that are hard to stop. After a long burst of coughing, some people may make a loud “whoop” sound when they take a breath in. These coughing fits can be very tiring and may happen many times a day. In babies, whooping cough can be especially dangerous. They may stop breathing for periods of time, get pneumonia, or even have seizures. These problems can be life-threatening, so it is important to watch for severe symptoms.

Parents should get medical help right away if a child has coughing spells so strong that they throw up, struggle to breathe, or turn blue or purple. Hearing a “whoop” sound when a child breathes in is also a sign that they need to see a doctor immediately.

The best way to protect children from whooping cough is through vaccination. Children should get the DTaP vaccine at 2, 4, and 6 months old. Booster shots are also given later in childhood. If you are not sure whether your child is up to date, you can check their vaccine record at

<https://kyirpublicportal.ky.gov> or ask their doctor.

Families can also reduce the spread of germs by washing their hands often, avoiding large crowds, and keeping babies away from anyone who is sick. Pregnant women should get a Tdap booster during each pregnancy to pass protection to their newborns. Adults who care for or live with a baby should also get a Tdap booster. If someone in the household gets whooping cough, a doctor may prescribe antibiotics for the sick person and sometimes for other family members to help prevent the illness from spreading.

REFERENCES:

- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2024, June 26). Whooping Cough Vaccination. <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/vaccines>
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2024, April 2). About Whooping Cough. <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/about>

Written by: Katherine Jury, Extension Specialist for Family Health

Edited by: Kerri L. Ashurst, Senior Extension Specialist for Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

Designed by: Rusty Manseau, Senior Graphic Artist

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