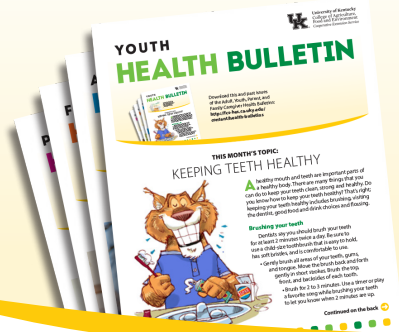


YOUTH HEALTH BULLETIN



JANUARY 2026

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC COVER YOUR COUGH

During winter, germs spread more easily, and you are more likely to get sick. Whooping cough, or pertussis, is a serious disease that is rare but has recently become more common in Kentucky. It gets its name from the "whoop" sound people may make when their throat swells from coughing too much.

Whooping cough begins like a cold but can lead to long, intense coughing fits that might make it hard to breathe and sometimes cause vomiting. It spreads easily from person to person through coughs and sneezes. It is preventable by getting a vaccine, which is the best way to stay healthy and protect others.

Although it is unpleasant for kids and adults, whooping cough

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The best way to protect yourself is to get the DTaP shot that guards against whooping cough.

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can be deadly for babies, young toddlers, and older people. Because it spreads so quickly and easily, it is important to prevent the disease whenever possible and to contain any infections that occur.

What it is and how it feels:

- **It is a germ, not just a cough:** Whooping cough is caused by bacteria that make your lungs and breathing passages become sore and swollen, leading to coughing.
- **It starts slowly:** At first, it feels like a cold with a runny nose and mild cough.
- **The cough gets worse:** After a week or two, strong coughing fits begin. They are so intense that you need to take a deep breath afterward, which can sound like a wheeze—hence the name “whooping cough”.
- **It can be frightening:** These coughing spells can be long and exhausting. They can even cause vomiting.

How it spreads:

Whooping cough is highly contagious. When someone with whooping cough coughs or sneezes, the germs can spread through the air to others. They can also land on surfaces and spread when people touch contaminated items. Staying home when



you are sick and covering your cough or sneeze are essential, just as we do with colds and the flu.

How to stay safe:

- **Vaccinations:** The best way to protect yourself is to get the DTaP shot that guards against whooping cough. Getting vaccinated not only keeps you safe but also helps protect your family and friends, especially babies who are too young to be fully protected.
- **Stay away when sick:** If you have a cough, runny nose, or fever, keep your germs to yourself. Stay away from babies, wash your hands often, and cover your coughs and sneezes. If your friends or family are sick, keep your distance. Postpone visits, and do not share personal care items.
- **Visit the doctor:** If your cough lasts more than a week or gets severe, see a doctor. They can give you medicine to fight the bacteria and help you recover.

REFERENCES:

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

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