



## Information for people who may have whooping cough

You have been advised by a healthcare professional that that you or your child may have whooping cough.

Whooping cough usually starts with symptoms similar to a cold, like a runny nose, sore throat, and sometimes a high temperature. After 1 or 2 weeks, you may start coughing. This information tells you what you should do if you have whooping cough, and what people in your household should do. This is to protect your health and others around you.

At the end of this information, there is a factsheet – please read this to learn more about whooping cough. There is also more information about whooping cough, and when to get help from a doctor, available at: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/whooping-cough/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/whooping-cough/).

### Stopping whooping cough spreading to other people

**If you are taking antibiotics** to treat whooping cough, then you should not go to nursery, school, or work until 48 hours after you have taken the first dose of your antibiotics.

**If you have not been prescribed antibiotics**, then you should not go to nursery, school, or work for 14 days after the day your cough started, unless you provide close personal care to babies younger than 12 months old in healthcare or a nursery as part of your work.

You should also try to avoid contact with babies younger than 12 months old, people who are pregnant, and healthcare workers who provide close personal care to either of these groups.

**You should also prevent the spread of whooping cough** to other people by:

- washing your hands often with soap and water
- using tissues and throwing them in the bin after you cough or sneeze

### Stopping whooping cough spreading if you work in nursery or healthcare

**If you have not been prescribed antibiotics, and work either in healthcare providing close personal care to babies younger than 12 months old, or in a nursery providing close personal care to babies younger than 12 months old (for example in a baby room),** then you should not go to work until 21 days after the day your cough started.

If you are a healthcare worker who provides close personal care to babies younger than 12 months old or people who are pregnant, then you should also contact your occupational health team to tell them that you have whooping cough as soon as possible.

### **When you should tell your employer**

If you are a healthcare worker who provides close personal care to babies younger than 12 months old, or people who are pregnant, then you should also contact your occupational health team to tell them that you have whooping cough.

## **Action and information for people in your household**

Everyone in your household may also be offered antibiotics or vaccination to protect them against whooping cough. This depends on when your cough started, and if you live with someone who is pregnant, or a baby younger than 12 months old, a healthcare worker who provides close personal care to either of these groups, or someone providing close personal care to babies younger than 12 months in another setting (for example, if you are a nursery worker in a baby room).

If you live with a baby younger than 12 months old who develops the symptoms of whooping cough, contact their GP for an urgent appointment or NHS 111 for advice.

If anyone else in your household develops the symptoms of whooping cough, then they should contact their GP for advice.

If you live with a healthcare worker who provides close personal care to babies younger than 12 months old, or pregnant women, then they should also speak to their occupational health team if they develop the symptoms of whooping cough.

Make sure that all babies and children under 10 years in your household have had all of their vaccinations. If they have not, or you are unsure if they have, speak to their GP for advice or to arrange an appointment for vaccination.

# Whooping cough factsheet

## What whooping cough is

Whooping cough is caused by the 'pertussis' bacteria (bug) and can spread between people. You can get whooping cough at any age, but it can make babies very unwell.

The first symptoms of whooping cough are similar to a cold, like a runny nose, sore throat, and sometimes a high temperature. After 1 or 2 weeks, someone with whooping cough may:

- have fits of coughing, which can last for a few minutes, and get worse at night
- make a 'whoop' sound when gasping for breath between coughs
- have difficulty breathing between coughs, and babies may turn blue or grey
- become very red in the face

Whooping cough can make babies younger than 12 months old very seriously unwell. In the worst cases, it can cause death. Vaccination of mothers during pregnancy, and babies from 8 weeks old, is the best protection for babies against whooping cough.

Older children and adults are less likely to become seriously unwell from whooping cough, but the symptoms can be quite uncomfortable and last for several weeks.

More information about whooping cough is available at: [Whooping cough - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk).

## How whooping cough spreads

You can catch whooping cough through close contact with someone who has whooping cough when they are coughing or sneezing. Whooping cough spreads in households and in other places where people mix closely together.

## Treatments for whooping cough

Treatment for whooping cough depends on your age and how long you have had the infection. Antibiotics are only likely to help your symptoms if taken within 2 weeks from the day your cough started. After this point, antibiotics are no longer effective, even though your symptoms may last for several weeks or months longer than this. Information on how to look after yourself or your child, and when to speak to a doctor, is available on the NHS website: [Whooping cough - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk).

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You should also try to avoid contact with babies younger than 12 months old, people who are pregnant, and healthcare workers who provide close personal care to either of these groups.

## **Stopping whooping cough spreading if you work in nursery or healthcare**

**If you have not been prescribed antibiotics, and work either in healthcare providing close personal care to babies younger than 12 months old, or in a nursery providing close personal care to babies younger than 12 months old (for example in a baby room), then you should not go to work until 21 days after the day your cough started.**

If you are a healthcare worker who provides close personal care to babies younger than 12 months old or people who are pregnant, then you should also contact your occupational health team to tell them that you have whooping cough as soon as possible.

## **Preventing whooping cough**

The best way to prevent whooping cough is through vaccination.

Babies and children in the UK are vaccinated against whooping cough as part of their [childhood vaccination schedule](#). Babies should receive 3 doses of a [6-in-1 vaccine](#) that protects them against whooping cough, when they are 8, 12, and 16 weeks old. Children should receive another booster dose against whooping cough in a [4-in-1 pre-school vaccine](#) when they are 3 years 4 months old.

If you think your child has missed any of their vaccinations against whooping cough, they can receive another vaccination for protection against whooping cough until they are 10 years old. Contact your child's GP to arrange an appointment.

You should also get vaccinated against whooping cough if you are pregnant to protect your baby as soon as they are born. You will be offered the vaccine between weeks 20 and 32 of your pregnancy, usually around the time of your 20 week scan but you can have the vaccine as early as week 16. If you have not been vaccinated between 16 and 32 weeks, you can still receive the vaccination up until you go into labour. If you have reached 20 weeks of pregnancy and have not yet been offered the whooping cough vaccine, please ask your midwife and/or GP practice.

When someone who catches whooping cough lives with someone who is pregnant, or a baby under 12 months, or a healthcare worker who provides close personal care for either of these groups, everyone in the household may be offered antibiotics or vaccination to prevent them from catching whooping cough.