

## **PERTUSSIS**

### **What is Pertussis?**

Pertussis is a disease caused by bacteria. It is also called “whooping cough”. Pertussis is usually mild in older children and adults, but often causes serious problems in babies.

### **What are the symptoms of Pertussis?**

Pertussis begins like a cold, with a runny nose, sneezing, fever and a cough that slowly gets worse. After two weeks, the cough usually turns into strong “coughing fits” that may last as long as six weeks. After a “coughing fit”, the person may have difficulty catching their breath and may make a whooping sound as they try to catch their breath. Babies may have difficulty eating, drinking or breathing.

### **How is Pertussis spread?**

The main way that Pertussis is spread is from person to person through the air after a person has coughed or sneezed. Sometimes it is spread when a person touches an object that someone has coughed or sneezed on.

### **Is Pertussis Dangerous?**

Pertussis can be very dangerous for babies. The disease can cause breathing problems, pneumonia and swelling of the brain which can lead to seizures and brain damage. Babies usually catch the disease from infected adolescents and adults. Babies are more susceptible because they are not old enough to have had all of the needed Pertussis immunizations. It is important to have all adolescents and adults who will be around the baby be immunized against Pertussis.

### **How can you protect yourself and your baby against Pertussis?**

1. Get immunized with the Pertussis vaccine.
2. Make sure that children up to the age of 7 are completely immunized against Pertussis.
3. Ask your healthcare provider about new vaccines that can protect adolescents and adults against Pertussis.
4. Make sure and visit a doctor if you show signs of “whooping cough”.
5. Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
6. Wash hands often.
7. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

For more information, visit [www.ImmunizeTexas.com](http://www.ImmunizeTexas.com) or call 1-800-252-9152.