

Gila County  
Health & Emergency Management

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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## Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Fact Sheet

### Background

Pertussis, also called whooping cough, is a very contagious respiratory illness caused by the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*. It is most common in young children, but older children and adults who are not immune can also become infected. Pertussis can be fatal, especially in infants.

### Symptoms

Symptoms develop 7 to 10 days after exposure and can last for several weeks. Early symptoms of pertussis are runny nose, sneezing, mild cough, and a low fever. Symptoms progress to sudden violent bursts of coughing and gasping for air. Children may make a whooping sound when breathing in after a coughing spell. Persons who have been vaccinated may develop a mild illness; more severe illness occurs in unvaccinated individuals.

### Transmission

Pertussis spreads through the air when infected people cough or sneeze, and is highly contagious.

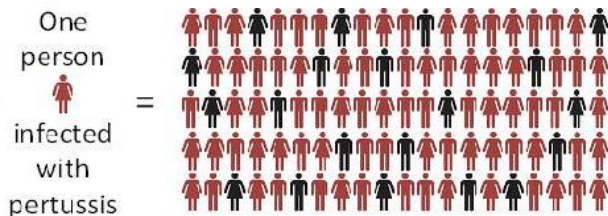
weakened immune systems are more likely to develop complications, including not being able to eat or drink, vomiting, broken ribs, and pneumonia. Pertussis can be fatal, especially for babies under 1 year of age.

To protect other patients, if you suspect that you have pertussis, wear a mask or call your medical provider before going to the facility.

### Prevention

- Vaccination is the best prevention
- Booster shots are required to maintain immunity
- Children should get 1 dose of pertussis vaccine at 6 weeks, 3 months, and 5 months of age
- Persons 11 years and older need a booster shot
- Persons with pertussis should stay home until completing treatment
- Consult your doctor if you come into contact with someone who has pertussis
- A doctor may prescribe antibiotics for those exposed to pertussis to prevent illness

Out of 100 non-immune people, about 80 will catch pertussis



Graphic from <http://www.ovg.ox.ac.uk/pertussis-whooping-cough>



### Treatment

Pertussis is usually treated with antibiotics to kill the *Bordetella* bacteria. A doctor may also prescribe other medicine to manage the fever and cough. Infants and those with severe illness frequently require hospitalization. Young children, babies, and those with

### For more information

If you need more information, please contact your primary care physician or Gila County Division of Health & Emergency Management at (928) 402-8811.