

Pertussis (Whooping Cough):

What Parents Should Know
for Students Attending Kindergarten
through 12th Grade in Ohio.



Pertussis Is More Than Just a Cough.

Pertussis (also called whooping cough) is a sickness that spreads easily from person to person.

When someone who is sick coughs or sneezes, tiny germs go into the air—and other people can breathe them in and get sick too.

If not treated with antibiotics, people with whooping cough can spread it to others for up to three weeks after the coughing starts.

What Are the Symptoms?

- At first, it might seem like a regular cold. You could have a runny nose, a little fever, and a small cough.
- After a few days, the cough gets much worse. It can be strong and dry.
- Sometimes, after a big coughing fit, you might hear a “whooping” sound when you take a deep breath.
- The coughing can be so hard that it makes it tough to breathe.
- Some people may cough so hard they throw up afterward.

Whooping Cough Can Be Very Serious for Babies and Young Kids

Whooping cough can make babies and little kids very sick. Sometimes, it can even be life-threatening.

It can cause problems like:

- Stopping breathing for a short time (called apnea).
- Lung infections (like pneumonia).
- Strong shaking or seizures (called convulsions).



DID YOU KNOW?

Kids with whooping cough usually have to stay home from school for about one week. If the cough is really bad, they might miss two or even three weeks of school.

Source: CDC Recommendations

Protect Your Child from Whooping Cough

The best way to keep your child safe from whooping cough is to get them vaccinated.

There are two kinds of vaccines that help provide protection:

- **DTaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis)** – for babies and young kids. They get it at 2, 4, 6, and 15–18 months, and again at 4–6 years old.
- **Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis)** – for older kids. They get it when they are 11 or 12 years old.

It's not too late to get the vaccine!

If your child is starting school and hasn't had all their shots, that's okay—there's still time. Talk to your doctor or health clinic to see what your child needs to stay healthy.

A healthy school year starts with staying protected!

Whooping cough vaccines are available at:

- Many doctor's offices.
- [Local Health Departments](#).
- Pharmacies (check with location based on your child's age).

K-12 school vaccine requirements in Ohio:

- **Ohio Revised Code 3313.671** requires students to be fully protected against 10 vaccine-preventable diseases, including pertussis (whooping cough).



Your child may be able to get vaccines for free or at a low cost through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. Check with your local health department to see if your child is eligible.