

Whooping Cough Symptoms, Diagnosis and Its Preventive Measures

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INTRODUCTION

Whooping cough is also called as pertussis. It is a serious respiratory infection that causes coughing fits. This infection causes high and uncontrollable coughing which makes difficulty in breathing sometimes it may also results in vomiting. It is highly contagious and can affect anyone. Whooping cough is also called as childhood disease before vaccines were developed because this disease mainly affects babies who are below 6 months old and kids below 18 years old. It is caused by a type of bacterium called as *Bordetella pertussis*. It is a communicable disease which spread from one to other. When a person with whooping cough coughs, laugh or sneezes small droplets that contains this bacteria passes through medium of air as a result it affects the healthy person who breathe through that air. So, it is also called air borne disease. This bacteria attaches to the tiny hairs of the lungs. It causes inflammation and swelling which leads to cough and other symptoms.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Symptoms usually develop within 5 to 10 days after you are infected with disease. Sometimes it may take 2-3 weeks to develop symptoms. The symptoms are mild and similar to common cold.

- Runny nose
- Nasal congestion
- Red watery eyes
- Low Fever

After a week, symptoms worsen. Thick mucus accumulates inside your airways, which results in uncontrollable coughing. Severe signs may include

- Vomiting
- Face becomes red
- Cause extreme fatigue
- High-pitched whoop sound

Many people don't develop the characteristic whooping. Sometimes, a persistent cough is only sign that an adult is suffering with whooping cough. Young child or baby may not cough at all but they may struggle to breathe, or may even stop breathing temporarily.

DIAGNOSIS

Whooping cough is difficult to diagnose because coughing may occur due to common cold, chest infections etc. However when you feel the symptoms it is better to consult your doctor. To identify the disease doctor performs physical exam and will take samples of mucus in the throat and nose. Samples which are collected will be tested to identify the presence of the bacteria. A blood test is necessary to get accurate diagnosis. Some of the tests to identify the disease are Chest X-ray, ELISA to detect IgM, IgG, IgA.

TREATMENT

Treatment depends on age and how long you are suffering with infection. Antibiotics are used to treat whooping cough because through experts it is believed that antibiotics reduce the lifespan of infection when they are given at initial stage. Antibiotics are important in later stages also because it helps to prevent the spread of disease. Antibiotics like erythromycin, clarithromycin and azithromycin are mainly used for the treatment.

PREVENTION

The only way to prevent the disease among infants, children and adults is to get vaccinated. The DTaP vaccine helps to protect children from the disease. Infants should get a dose every other month for first 6 months, another dose between 15 and 18 months, then last dose between the age of 4 and 6. Following the above preventive measures also helps in reducing the spread of disease

- Cover your mouth and nose into your upper sleeve or elbow while coughing or sneezing
- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently
- Use alcohol-based sanitizers to clean your hands

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