



Countywide Services Agency

Department of  
Health and Human Services

Division of Public Health

Glennah Trochet, M.D.  
County Health Officer

County of Sacramento

Steve Szalay, County Executive  
Bruce Wagstaff, Interim Agency  
Administrator  
Ann Edwards-Buckley, Director

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Fact Sheet

*Updated 2/06*

**What is it?**

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) is a highly contagious bacterial infection that causes coughing and gagging with little or no fever. An infected person has coughing episodes that may end in vomiting or cause a “whoop” sound when the person tries to breathe in.

**Symptoms**

3

- 
- 3 Pertussis is most dangerous to children less than 1-year of age. Complications for infants include pneumonia, convulsions, and in rare cases, brain damage or death.
  - 3 Serious complications are less likely in older children and adults.

**How is it spread?**

- 3 Pertussis is spread through direct or indirect contact with respiratory droplets that enter the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
- 3 Spread can occur in the early stage when symptoms appear as a cold or later when the infected person begins to cough.
- 3 Those treated with one of the recommended antibiotics are contagious until the first 5 days of antibiotic treatment have been completed. The total duration of treatment depends on the antibiotic prescribed.

**Who gets it?**

3