

Pertussis

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*. In 2018, there were more than 151 000 cases of pertussis globally.

Pertussis spreads easily from person to person mainly through droplets produced by coughing or sneezing. The disease is most dangerous in infants, and is a significant cause of disease and death in this age group.

The first symptoms generally appear 7 to 10 days after infection. They include a mild fever, runny nose and cough, which in typical cases gradually develops into a hacking cough followed by whooping (hence the common name of whooping cough). Pneumonia is a relatively common complication, and seizures and brain disease occur rarely.

People with pertussis are most contagious up to about 3 weeks after the cough begins, and many children who contract the infection have coughing spells that last 4 to 8 weeks. Antibiotics are used to treat the infection.