



Parapertussis

Consult the health department before posting/distributing Parent/Guardian fact sheet.

Parapertussis is a bacterial illness that affects the lungs. It is similar to pertussis but tends to be a milder disease. It is not a reportable disease.

School health and childcare provider information

Cause

Bordatella parapertussis bacteria.

Symptoms

Parapertussis begins with a runny nose, sneezing, mild cough, and possibly a low-grade fever. The cough may occur in sudden, uncontrollable bursts (paroxysms), sometimes ending with high-pitched whooping sounds and/or vomiting.

Spread

Parapertussis bacteria are spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes tiny droplets into the air, and another person breathes them in. It can also be spread by touching the secretions from the nose and mouth of an infected person and then touching one's eyes, nose, or mouth.

Incubation

It takes 6 to 21 days (usually 7 to 10 days) from the time a person is exposed until symptoms start.

Contagious period

Unknown, but probably most infectious during the first three weeks of coughing. A person with parapertussis is no longer infectious after completing five days of antibiotic treatment or if they have been coughing longer than 3 weeks.

Exclusion

Childcare and school

None if the child is well enough to participate in routine activities.

Diagnosis

Laboratory tests are performed on material collected by placing a flexible swab through the nostril to the back of the nose and throat (nasopharyngeal swab) or on a blood sample.

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Treatment

Persons with parapertussis can be treated with antibiotics, but it may do little to lessen the symptoms. Treatment is most effective if started within 1-2 weeks of symptoms and prior to any cough paroxysms. Infants with parapertussis are usually treated.

Prevention

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or cough/sneeze into your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues in the trash.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with secretions from the nose or mouth. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent spread of communicable diseases.** If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).
- Preventive treatment is not generally recommended for contacts of people with parapertussis. However, preventive treatment may be considered for close contacts who are at a higher risk for more severe disease, including infants and immunocompromised people.

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 542-5230 or call your local health department.

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