Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

Infection Prevention

Information for patients

What is whooping cough?

Pertussis is better known as whooping cough. It is a serious infection that affects the respiratory tract, caused by the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*. It is highly contagious.

Whooping cough mainly affects babies and young children but can also occur in adults.

Infectious adults are a danger to babies who have not completed their vaccination course. Whooping cough can be fatal for babies less than 6 months old.

What are the symptoms?

In adults, the symptoms of whooping cough are similar to a cold. There is usually a severe, prolonged cough, where the classic 'whoop' sound might occur when breathing in (this is more common in children). Bouts of coughing may be followed by vomiting or incontinence (loss of bladder control).

How can we stop the spread of whooping cough?

Vaccination is the most effective protection against whooping cough and is part of the National Immunisation Program for babies, children and pregnant women.

Adults in contact with babies and young children should have their status checked by their GP as immunity may decrease over time.

Infection prevention and control measures are focused on minimising the spread of the whooping cough within hospitals and between wards and departments.

I’ve been told I have whooping cough

How will I be cared for in hospital?

Hand hygiene: It’s very important that staff, patients and visitors clean their hands every time they enter or leave a room or cubicle. To clean hands, alcohol based hand rub or soap and water can be used.

It’s OK to ask: Please feel free to remind your healthcare worker about cleaning their hands.
Pertussis (Whooping Cough)  
Patient Information

Contact information  
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Infection Prevention  
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Cleaning: The frequency of cleaning and disinfection of your room/ward may increase, focusing on cleaning surfaces that are frequently touched.

Isolation: Whilst infectious you will be cared for in a single room. Healthcare workers will put on gowns and gloves and wear a mask when entering your room and during your care.

This is to protect them and to reduce the likelihood of spread to other patients that they are caring for.

What can you do?
- Cover your nose/mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- If possible, cough into your elbow and not into your hands.
- Use tissues when you sneeze, cough or blow your nose and put them into the bin straight away.
- Wash or disinfect your hands immediately afterwards.

Procedures and diagnostic tests:
Whilst you are infectious, should you need to leave your room for any procedure/tests, there may be changes in schedules to ensure that other patients are not exposed to the bacteria.

You will be required to wear a mask when leaving your room to prevent the spread of infection to others.

What do my visitors need to do?

Visitors must wear a mask at all times in the room

Visitors may also be asked to wear a gown and gloves if they are directly involved in your care. Your visitors will be shown how to apply and remove personal protective equipment by a healthcare worker.

Your visitors should take care to ensure that their hands are clean by using either the alcohol based hand rub or soap and water before and after leaving your room.