

Whooping cough, patient information

Why have I received this information?

Tests have shown that you have whooping cough.

What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough is caused by a bacterial infection of the airways. The disease usually starts off as a cold, which then turns into a severe cough that ends with whooping* and sometimes vomiting. The symptoms can last for several weeks.

Whooping cough can cause severe respiratory problems including respiratory arrest, especially in infants (children under 1 year old). If a pregnant woman is sick with whooping cough during childbirth, then the newborn baby can be infected and become seriously ill.

The time from infection to illness (incubation period) is usually 1–2 weeks. Sometimes, it can take up to 3 weeks.

*A whoop is a hissing or wheezing sound heard when a person draws in air after a long coughing fit.

How is whooping cough transmitted?

The whooping cough bacterium is spread by coughing or sneezing. The greatest risk of infection is found indoors.

Can whooping cough be treated?

Treatment with antibiotics can reduce infection but often has little effect on symptoms. Treatment is usually only given when there is a risk of infants becoming infected or ill.

Does vaccination against whooping cough help?

The childhood vaccination programme offers all children in Sweden vaccination against whooping cough at 3, 5 and 12 months of age, at 5 years of age and in years 8–9.

Vaccination reduces the risk of infants becoming seriously ill. The risk of serious illness is already reduced when the child receives the first dose of the vaccine.

Following vaccination, the protection starts to decline after 5 years.

The vaccine does not fully protect against infection. Vaccinated people can still get sick and infect others.

If I have had whooping cough, can I get it again?

After infection with whooping cough, immunity (protection) is around 15 years. After that, you can get whooping cough again and also infect others.

How long am I contagious?

Whooping cough is most contagious in the early stages of the illness and becomes less contagious as time goes by. It is not possible to say exactly when the risk of infection passes, but after several weeks of illness the risk of infection is very low. Once the cough has cleared up, there is no longer any risk of infection.

What should I keep in mind so as not to infect others?

- Avoid contact with infants and pregnant women who are in the late stage of their pregnancy.
- If you have spent time with babies or pregnant women since becoming ill, you should tell your doctor as soon as possible.
- Children who have had whooping cough can return to preschool once they have regained their energy and desire to play and when they can eat and drink as usual.

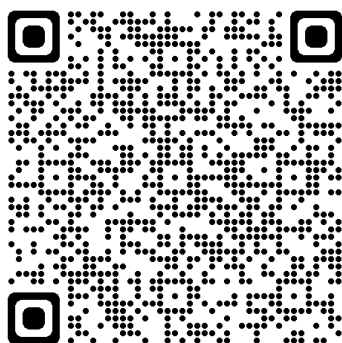
Contact tracing

According to the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act, you must participate in contact tracing. This means that you must provide information to healthcare professionals so they can assess when, where and how you may have been infected and whether you may have infected others.

The information you provide is confidential (under professional secrecy) and the people you name will not know who you are.

More information

[Whooping cough – 1177](#)



About the infection prevention sheet

The infection prevention sheet is produced by the Swedish Association of County Medical Officers and is valid nationally.