

Patients with suspected whooping cough (Pertussis)

Emergency Department

Information for Patients

Produced: May 2024

Review: May 2027

Leaflet number: 1501 Version: 1

You have been given this leaflet because you or a family member have attended the Emergency Department and staff believe you / they may have whooping cough.

This leaflet will explain more about what will happen next, what whooping cough (pertussis) is and how you can look after children and adults with this infection.

What happens now?

In the Emergency Department, we took a swab from the nose. We have sent this for whooping cough testing. The results of this can take up to a week.

The team at the hospital have passed on your details to the UK Health Security Agency. They may contact you by phone to ask for more information. UKHSA will be in touch if whooping cough is confirmed.

Your doctor may have prescribed antibiotics if your illness started recently. If you have been given antibiotics please remember to stay off nursery, school or work, and avoid contact with young babies or pregnant women until 48 hours after starting antibiotics.

What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough is caused by the 'pertussis' bacteria (bug). It is spread by coughing and sneezing. The symptoms often start like a cold, progressing to outbursts of coughing which can sometimes cause you to be sick (vomit) or choke. The cough sometimes has a characteristic 'whoop' sound. The best way to stop whooping cough is to be fully vaccinated and for pregnant woman to get a booster vaccination to protect their newborn baby.

Babies under 6 months have a greater chance of problems such as dehydration, pneumonia and seizures. In older children it is less severe but can cause sore ribs, middle ear infections and leaking of pee (urine) when you cough.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Treatment and vaccination

Antibiotics may not reduce the symptoms of whooping cough but are important for helping stop the spread to others. Antibiotics are only given if you have had the cough for less than 21 days.

If you have been coughing for more than 21 days you are no longer spreading the illness and do not need antibiotics. The cough may last some weeks or months.

You can ease the symptoms of whooping cough by getting lots of rest, drinking lots of fluids and using paracetamol or ibuprofen to ease discomfort.

Do not take cough medicines. These are not suitable for young children and do not help with this type of cough.

When should I call for help?

Call 999 or go to A&E if:

- your or your child's lips, tongue, face or skin suddenly turn blue or grey (on black or brown skin this may be easier to see on the palms of the hands or the soles of the feet)
- you or your child are finding it hard to breathe properly (shallow breathing)
- you or your child have chest pain that is worse when breathing or coughing. This could be a sign of pneumonia
- your child is having seizures (fits)

If you are worried and need more general advice, please contact your GP or phone 111. Remember to tell them that you may have whooping cough.

What can be done to protect other people from whooping cough?

- If there is a baby under 1 year who is not fully vaccinated in your household, and you are concerned they may have symptoms of whooping cough, seek prompt advice from the baby's GP
- Anyone in your household who is pregnant and has reached their 16th week of pregnancy but has not yet had a pertussis-containing vaccine during this pregnancy should be vaccinated
- Make sure all babies and children under 10 years in your household are fully up to date with their vaccines. You can check this with your GP surgery if you are not sure
- If you work with babies or pregnant woman and have been told you have whooping cough please tell your workplace occupational health department.
- If the patient attends or works in a boarding or special needs school, please tell them that you/ they have possible whooping cough.

Vaccine uptake levels in pregnant women, babies and young children have fallen in recent years across England.

Vaccination in pregnancy (ideally between 20 and 32 weeks) is key to passively protecting babies before they can be directly protected by the infant vaccine programme.

It is also important that babies are vaccinated when they become eligible for infant doses and that those who miss vaccination catch up as soon as possible.

Whooping cough in babies

Whooping cough can be a very serious illness in young babies who are not fully vaccinated against it with 3 doses of the pertussis containing vaccine (offered at 8, 12 and 16 weeks of age).

Because of this, if there are pregnant women or young babies in your household, and it is less than 21 days since your symptoms started, they may be offered antibiotics and vaccination to help protect them.

Giving us your feedback

We would love to get some feedback on your visit today. Use your smart phone to scan the QR code for quick access to our online feedback survey form.

Or, you can access the feedback form from our website:

www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/patients/thinking-of-choosing-us/patient-experience/



اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

જે તુમીં ઇંચ નાજવારી કિમે હેર ડામ્મા દિચ ચાહુંદે હે, ડાં વિરખા વચ્ચે હેઠાં દિંડે ગદે નંબર 'હે ટૈલીફોન વચે

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

Previous reference:

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk