



What is pertussis?

Pertussis, also called “whooping cough,” is a disease caused by bacteria. Pertussis is usually mild in older children and adults, but it often causes serious problems in babies.

Who gets pertussis?

Pertussis is most common among babies, but anyone can get it. Pertussis can be hard to diagnose in babies, teens, and adults because their symptoms often look like a cold with a nagging cough. Babies often get pertussis from older children or adults.

What are the symptoms of pertussis?

Pertussis begins like a cold, with a runny nose, sneezing, mild fever, and cough that slowly gets worse. After one to two weeks, the cough usually turns into strong “coughing fits,” which may last six weeks or longer. There is generally no fever during this time. After coughing, infected persons may vomit, have difficulty catching their breath, or become blue in the face from lack of air. The cough is often worse at night, and cough medicines usually do not help. In young children, coughing fits are often followed by a whooping sound as they try to catch their breath. The coughing spells may be so bad for babies that they have difficulty eating, drinking, or breathing. Between coughing spells, the person often appears well. Some babies may only have apnea (failure to breathe). Adults, teens, and vaccinated children often have milder symptoms that mimic bronchitis or asthma.

How is pertussis spread?

Like a cold, pertussis spreads into the air when an infected person sneezes, coughs, or talks. That is when others nearby can inhale the bacteria. Touching a tissue or sharing a cup used by someone with pertussis can also spread the disease. The first symptoms usually appear within 5 to 21 days after the initial infection.

Is pertussis dangerous?

It can be, especially for babies. Pertussis can cause breathing problems (apnea), pneumonia, and swelling of the brain (encephalopathy), which can lead to seizures and brain damage. Pertussis can also cause death (rarely), especially in babies.

Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heat-related illness that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids. It is the body’s response to an excessive loss of the water and salt contained in sweat. Those most prone to heat exhaustion are elderly people, people with high blood pressure, and people working or exercising in a hot environment. Warning signs of heat exhaustion include:

- Heavy sweating
- Paleness
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting

The skin may be cool and moist, the victim’s pulse rate will be fast and weak, and breathing will be fast and shallow. If heat exhaustion is untreated, it may progress to heat stroke. Seek medical attention

immediately if symptoms are severe or if the victim has heart problems or high blood pressure. Otherwise, help the victim to cool off, and seek medical attention if symptoms worsen or last longer than one hour. Cooling measures that may be effective include:

- Cool, nonalcoholic beverages, as directed by a physician
- Rest
- Cool shower, bath, or sponge bath
- An air-conditioned environment
- Lightweight clothing

Heat Cramps

Heat cramps usually affect people who sweat a lot during strenuous activity. This sweating depletes the body's salt and moisture. The low salt level in the muscles causes painful cramps. Heat cramps may also be a symptom of heat exhaustion. Heat cramps are muscle pains or spasms—usually in the abdomen, arms, or legs—that may occur in association with strenuous activity. If you have heart problems or are on a low-sodium diet, get medical attention for heat cramps.

If medical attention is not necessary, take these steps:

- Stop all activity, and sit quietly in a cool place.
- Drink clear juice or a sports beverage.
- Do not return to strenuous activity for a few hours after the cramps subside, because further exertion may lead to heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
- Seek medical attention for heat cramps if they do not subside in 1 hour.

Heat Rash

Heat rash is a skin irritation caused by excessive sweating during hot, humid weather. It can occur at any age but is most common in young children. Heat rash looks like a red cluster of pimples or small blisters. It is more likely to occur on the neck and upper chest, in the groin, under the breasts, and in elbow creases.

The best treatment for heat rash is to provide a cooler, less humid environment. Keep the affected area dry. Dusting powder may be used to increase comfort, but avoid using ointments or creams—they keep the skin warm and moist and may make the condition worse.

Sunburn

Sunburn should be avoided because it damages the skin. Although the discomfort is usually minor and healing often occurs in about a week, a more severe sunburn may require medical attention. Symptoms of sunburn are well known: the skin becomes red, painful, and abnormally warm after sun exposure.

What to Do

Consult a doctor if the sunburn affects an infant younger than 1 year of age or if fever, fluid-filled blisters or severe pain are present.

Also, remember these tips when treating sunburn:

- Avoid repeated sun exposure.
- Apply cold compresses or immerse the sunburned area in cool water.
- Apply moisturizing lotion to affected areas. Do not use salve, butter, or ointment.
- Do not break blisters.

For more information, call 817-321-4700 or visit our Web site:

<http://health.tarrantcounty.com>