

Pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine

In infants, pertussis (whooping cough) causes coughing spells so bad that it is hard to eat, drink, or breathe. These spells can last for weeks. It can lead to pneumonia, seizures, brain damage, and death. There continue to be deaths in recent years from this disease in Oregon.

In older children, teens, and adults, it causes severe coughing spells, vomiting, and disturbed sleep. It can lead to weight loss, incontinence, rib fractures and passing out from violent coughing, pneumonia, and hospitalization due to complications. Although this is not usually a life-threatening disease for older children and adults, it is still a significant problem. In 2004 there were more than 25,000 cases of pertussis in the U.S. More than 8,000 of these cases were among adolescents and more than 7,000 were among adults. Up to 2 in 100 adolescents and 5 in 100 adults with pertussis are hospitalized or have complications.

This vaccine is given as part of a combination vaccine with the vaccines against tetanus and diphtheria. One formulation (DTaP) is designed for children from 6 weeks to 7 years of age. The other (Tdap) is designed for children and adults age 11 years or older.