

## Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

### *What is pertussis (whooping cough)?*

Pertussis is a respiratory illness commonly known as whooping cough that is caused by the *Bordetella pertussis* bacteria. Pertussis is spread from person to person through the air. A person may even catch pertussis by standing close (less than three feet away) to an infected person who is coughing or sneezing. A person has to breathe in droplets from an infected person to get sick.

### *What are the signs and symptoms of pertussis?*

- The first signs of pertussis are similar to a cold: sneezing, runny nose, fever, and cough
- After a week or two the cough gets worse and occurs in sudden, uncontrollable bursts (one cough follows the next without a break for breath)
- After a coughing spell, a person may have a hard time breathing, appear blue in the face, and may vomit
- Pertussis can be very serious, especially in infants. Many infants who get pertussis are infected by older siblings, parents, or caregivers who might not even know they have the disease
- Maine CDC issued a health alert with an update on pertussis on Aug. 4. It is available here: <http://go.usa.gov/NEG4>

### *What can be done to prevent pertussis?*

- The best way to protect against Pertussis is immunization
- Wash your hands frequently or use alcohol-based hand gel
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder
- If you feel sick, stay home and avoid close contact with others
- Disinfect commonly used or high touch areas, like tables, counters, and doorknobs

### *Resources:*

- For more guidance and information, visit <http://go.usa.gov/dCO>