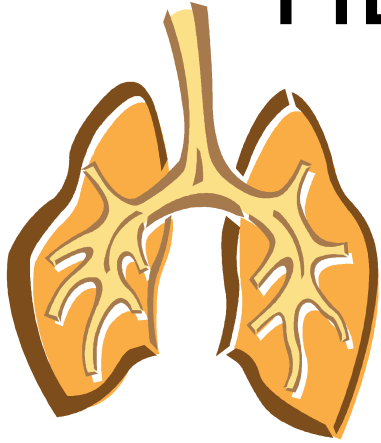


HEALTH TIPS FOR MID WINTER, 2011

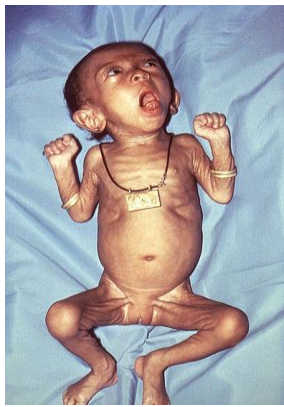


PERTUSSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH)



BY
JANE WEST, RN
PARISH NURSE





PERTUSSIS WHOOPING COUGH



- Is an upper respiratory infection caused by the bacteria *Bordetella*.
- It is a serious illness that can cause permanent disability and/or death in infants.
- Most children are immunized prior to entering school so more cases are being seen among teens and adults, now.

It can affect people of any age including the elderly.



SYMPTOMS

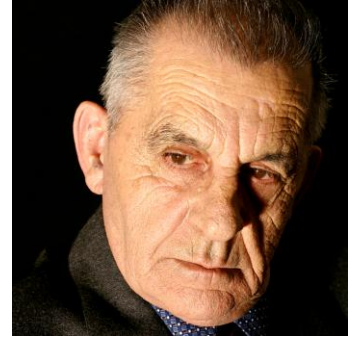


- Initially, symptoms are similar to the common cold.
- Symptoms usually develop about a week after exposure to the bacteria.
- Exposure occurs when an infected person sneezes or coughs. Tiny droplets in the air move the bacteria easily from person to person.





MORE SYMPTOMS



- Severe coughing begins about 10 to 12 days later.
- In children, the cough often ends with a whoop noise. The sound is produced when the child tries to take a breath.
- **The whoop cough is rare in children under 6 months of age and in adults.**
- Coughing spells may cause vomiting or a short loss of consciousness.
- Choking spells often occur in infants.



OTHER PERTUSSIS SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- Runny nose
- Slight fever (102 degrees, F or lower)
- Diarrhea

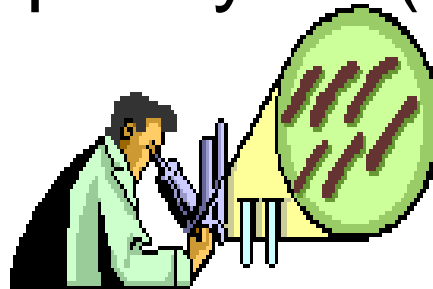




DIAGNOSIS



- Usually based on the symptoms
- In infants, symptoms can also be caused by pneumonia
- A mucus swab can detect the bacteria but takes time so **treatment is started immediately if pertussis is suspected**
- A complete blood count may show large numbers of lymphocytes (certain white blood cells)



TREATMENT



- The antibiotic, erythromycin quickly causes symptoms to subside if given early in the course of the disease.
- Unfortunately, most patients are diagnosed too late for the antibiotic to be very effective.
- **Infants younger than 18 months need to be hospitalized and under constant supervision as they can stop breathing during the coughing spells.**



COMPLICATIONS

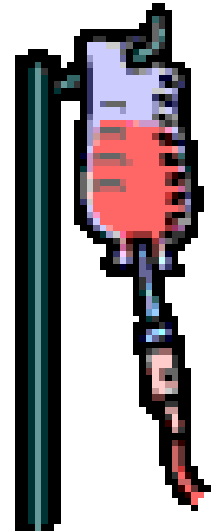
- Pneumonia
- Ear infections and nose bleeds
- Seizures which may become permanent
- Brain bleeding and damage
- Inability to breath
- Mental retardation
- Death



HOSPITAL CARE



- Oxygen tent with high humidity
- Fluids are given intravenously if they cannot be taken orally
- Sleep medicine may be prescribed for young children
- **Cough medicine** is not helpful and **SHOULD NOT BE USED**



PROGNOSIS AND PREVENTION

- Infants have the highest risk of death and need careful attention.
- In older children, the outlook is generally very good.
- Infant and childhood immunizations such as DTaP protect against pertussis.
- The immunization should be given again at age 11 or 12 and should be repeated every 10 years
- *** Children who are not immunized cannot attend school*.**
- Adults up to age 65 years should also receive the adult form of the vaccine.
- As always, staying away from those who are ill and good hand washing are advised. (See Health Tips for Winter, 2010)





TEST QUESTION



How can you keep from getting pertussis?

- A. Keeping a distance from coughing persons
- B. Getting the pertussis immunization
- C. Praying for strength to stay well
- D. All of the above

(See parish nurse for answer)

