

Pertussis (whooping cough)

What is pertussis?

Pertussis (also known as whooping cough) is a lung infection which causes long periods of coughing. The infection is caused by bacteria called 'Bordetella Pertussis'. Whooping cough is spread by droplets of fluid when coughing and/or sneezing. Affected children are infectious just prior to and for three weeks after the start of the cough, if untreated.

Symptoms of pertussis

Symptoms may include:

- Pertussis begins with symptoms similar to the common cold, such as a runny nose and dry cough
- A more pronounced cough then develops and can last for many weeks. The coughing spells can last a while and often end with a high pitched 'whoop' sound when they breathe in.
- Some children may vomit after coughing
- Children are usually well between coughing spells
- Very young babies may have pauses in breathing (apnoeas) instead of a cough

Treatment of pertussis

The treatment process differs for each patient. If your child has difficulty breathing then they may need to be observed in hospital with additional oxygen as required.

The risk of pertussis can be minimised by the routine childhood vaccination course. Children can still get pertussis after vaccinations, however the illness is usually less severe.

If hospitalised

Admission

The admission process is an opportunity to discuss your child's hospital stay and any special needs they may have while in hospital or for going home.

Visiting hours

The Cabrini Paediatric Ward does not have set visiting hours.

Discharge

Your child will be discharged when your doctor is happy with their progress and condition and you are confident with caring for them at home.

Please report to the reception desk in the foyer of the hospital before leaving to finalise any administrative paperwork.

Care at home

- It is important for your child to rest at home after leaving hospital - breathing is more difficult when your child is upset
- Give your child smaller, yet more frequent, diet and fluids - this helps your child to not tire as easily with feeding and reduces the risk of dehydration.
- Ensure your child remains in a smoke-free environment to assist with their breathing and recovery
- Keep your child away from school/day-care for three weeks from the start of the cough, or if applicable, until they have had at least five days of antibiotics

Follow-up

Please contact your doctor's rooms to organise a follow-up appointment.

When to contact your doctor

- Worsening symptoms of noisy breathing or coughing
- Persistent temperature of 38.5°C or higher
- Any questions or concerns

Questions

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact the Ward using the phone number below.