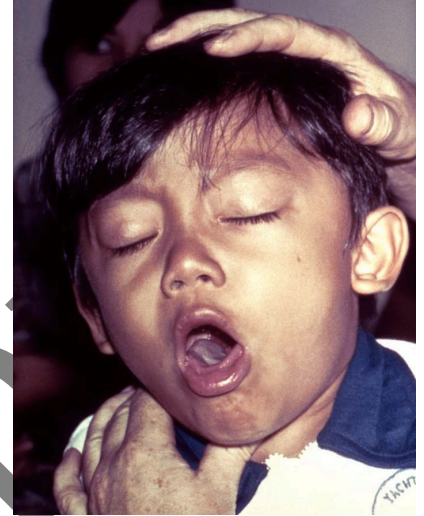


Whooping Cough - Pertussis

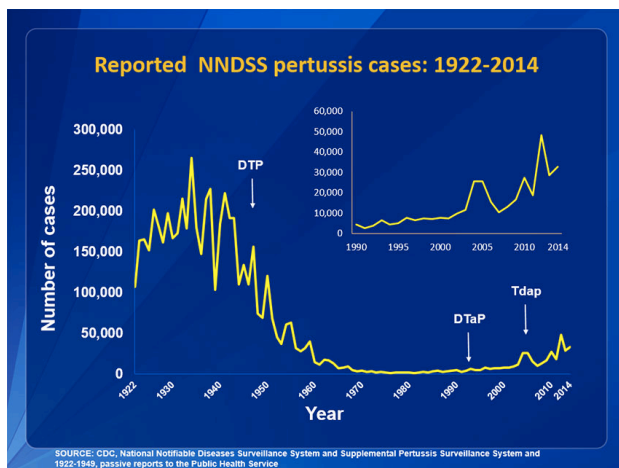
What is Whooping Cough?

Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is a highly contagious infection caused by a bacterium known as *Bordetella pertussis*. In some countries, the disease is called 100 days' cough. It is characterized by repeated attacks of spasmodic coughing that consists of a series of explosive respirations (breathing in and out); typically ending in a long drawn forced inspiration (air in) that produces a sound called the "whoop" and usually provoked by crying, eating, drinking, or physical exertion, (Stoppler, 2014).



History and Prevalence Rate

In the 16th century, the first recorded outbreaks of whooping cough disease were discovered and in 1906, the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis* was first identified. In 1922, there were 107,473 cases



but that number declined significantly in the late 1940's and 1950's after the introduction of the pertussis vaccine. Throughout the 1950's, the number of cases ranged from 30 – 60 thousand but declined further in the 1960's and 70's where the number of identified cases was generally as low as 2000 – 3000 (Rettner, 2014). With the steep decline in cases, many people felt it was no longer necessary to vaccinate their children as the disease

was out of sight, out of mind. As a result, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2014, there were 32,971 reported cases of whooping cough in the U.S.! Currently, the pertussis vaccine has been combined with vaccines for diphtheria and tetanus and is called the DTaP vaccine.

Signs and Symptoms

The initial symptoms of whooping cough are similar to that of a cold and include a runny nose, sneezing, mild cough and low-grade fever. Symptoms usually appear six days to three weeks after

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Treatments

Children with whooping cough under two years of age should be hospitalized for treatment because there is a likelihood that the disease will lead to complications. The child may be hooked up to an IV to provide necessary food and fluids. As well, he/she will be placed in an isolation room to prevent the spread of the infection.

Prescription drugs can treat older children, adolescents, and adults at home. Prescription drugs include corticosteroids and antibiotics. Corticosteroids are potent hormones and are given with an inhaler, as well as in tablets, gels, and injections. They are commonly prescribed if the person has severe symptoms and are effective in reducing inflammation to the airways. Antibiotics are given to shorten the period of sickness by killing the *Bordetella pertussis* bacterium. It is also administered to the members of the household to prevent the spread of infection. Although antibiotics shouldn't be given until the diagnosis is confirmed, doctors will usually do so prior to as a proactive measure. This is effective as it decreases the duration of the sickness but also potentially harmful as the unnecessary use of antibiotics has led to the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria over the years. Oxygen supplements may also be given through a facemask or a bulb syringe may be used if necessary, to suction away mucus build up and aid the child in breathing, (Yeh S, et al, 2013).

Other Interventions

It is recommended that sufferers get as much bed rest as possible and avoid places high in dust, smoke and pollution. Meticulous care and adequate nutritional support during the critical period of illness are some of the most important therapeutic considerations. Repeated clearing of the respiratory tract to remove mucus and other secretions is necessary to prevent choking. Adequate fluid intake is also important to prevent dehydration.

Complications

The majority of older children and adult patients can quickly recover from pertussis with no complications or problems. Most of the complications are usually caused by the strenuous and intense coughing experienced during the illness. These complications include nose bleeding, ulceration of mouth and tongue, bruised or cracked ribs, abdominal hernias, middle-ear infection or otitis media, broken blood vessels in the sclera and swollen face.

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Reading Comprehension Questions:

1. What bacteria causes pertussis?
2. What
3. What
4. How is whooping cough usually transmitted?
5. What
6. What are the most serious complications young children may suffer from as a result of pertussis?

Extension Questions:

7. Refer to the graph on page 1.
8. Research
9. Do you feel that
10. Research the specific immunization schedule for the prevention of pertussis.

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