

Health Bulletin

Health tips and news for the community



WINTER 2013

Pertussis

Pertussis, or **whooping cough**, is an upper respiratory infection caused by a type of bacteria. Infants are most at risk for severe disease including, pneumonia, seizures, brain damage and even death. The bacteria are passed in tiny droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. A person with pertussis can pass the disease to other people by coughing or sneezing around them. It is very contagious.

Pertussis causes uncontrollable coughing that can make it hard to breathe. A "whooping" sound is heard when the person tries to take a breath. The symptoms usually last for 6 weeks or longer.

There are vaccines, or shots, that can help protect you from pertussis. The **DTaP** vaccine is for infants and children under 7 years of age, and the **Tdap** vaccine is for older children and adults. These vaccines will protect you against **t**etanus (lockjaw), **d**iphtheria and **p**ertussis. Make sure that your family is up-to-date with their pertussis vaccines.

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- Pertussis (whooping cough)
- Falls Among Older Adults and Prevention Tips
- Fire Prevention Tips



Symptoms of pertussis:

- Runny nose
- Slight fever (102 °F or lower)
- Severe repeated coughs that:
 - Make it hard to breathe
 - Cause vomiting
 - May be followed by a "whooping" sound when a person inhales
 - Choking spells in infants

When to contact a doctor:

- Call your healthcare provider if you or your child get pertussis symptoms.
- Go to an emergency room if the sick person has any of these symptoms:
 - Bluish skin color
 - Periods of stopped breathing (apnea)
 - Seizures or convulsions
 - Non-stop vomiting
 - Dehydration

All adults who have contact with infants - new parents, caretakers - especially women who are pregnant - should also get the whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine to protect babies who are too young for the shot to protect them.

The flu and pertussis are both spread by coughing and sneezing, and can cause problems in children and adults. You can prevent both of them with vaccines.
For a flu clinic location, call the Philadelphia Department of Public Health Flu Hotline at **215-685-6458**.

STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE HEALTH BULLETIN

You can find the Health Bulletin in many languages at <http://www.phila.gov/Health/DiseaseControl/healthBulletin.html>.
For more information about the Health Bulletin, contact Marialisa Ramirez at 215-685-6496 or HealthBulletin@phila.gov.

Falls Among Older Adults

Each year, one in every three adults age 65 and older falls.

Falls can cause moderate to severe injuries, such as hip fractures and head traumas, and can increase the risk of early death.



How Can Older Adults Prevent Falls?



- **Exercise.** Do exercises that focus on leg strength and balance. Tai Chi programs are a good example.
- **Review your medicine.** Ask your doctor to review your prescription and over-the-counter medicines to identify which ones may cause dizziness or drowsiness side effects. Advil and Tylenol are examples of over-the-counter medicines.
- **Have your eyes checked.** Visit your eye doctor at least once a year and get your eyeglasses updated.
- **Make your home safe.** Add grab bars inside and outside the tub or shower and next to the toilet. Add stair railings and make sure the lighting in your home is bright and not dim.

Did you know that a **disaster** could severely affect a person with **osteoporosis**?
Do you know how to **protect your health** during a disaster?

To learn more about osteoporosis and ways to protect your health,
visit: www.phila.gov/health/pdfs/Osteo.pdf

Did You Know?

- **According to the Philadelphia Fire Department, 27 of last year's 32 fire fatalities occurred in buildings without smoke detectors, or with detectors with dead or missing batteries.**
- **Most house fires happen during the winter months.**
- **Older adults and children 4 and under are at an increased risk of fire-related injuries and deaths.**

Fire Prevention Tips

- Never leave food unattended on a stove.
- Do not leave potholders and towels near or on the stove.
- Do not wear clothes with long, loose-fitting sleeves when cooking.
- Never smoke in bed or leave burning cigarettes unattended.
- Do not empty hot ashes in a trash can.
- Keep ashtrays away from furniture and curtains.
- Never put portable space heaters near flammable materials (such as, curtains).
- Keep all matches and lighters out of reach of children. Store them in a locked cabinet.
- Install smoke-alarms on every floor of the home, including the basement.
- Change the batteries in your smoke-alarm twice a year.
- Test all smoke-alarms every month to make sure they are working.
- Make a fire escape plan and practice it every 6 months. Think of at least two different ways household members can escape, and select a safe meeting place away from the home.
- If possible, install fire sprinklers in your home.



**Call the
smoke-alarm
hotline at
215-686-1176
to get a
free
smoke-alarm.**