

Parapertussis and Holmesii

What is parapertussis?

Parapertussis is a disease that affects the lungs. Parapertussis is similar to pertussis (whooping cough), but it is less severe.

What is holmesii?

Holmesii is a relatively new bacteria. It is similar to parapertussis and pertussis, but it is less common.

What are the symptoms of parapertussis/holmesii?

The symptoms of parapertussis and holmesii can be similar to a cold: sneezing, a runny nose, possibly low-grade fever, and a cough. After a week or two, the cough may become more severe and include:

- A cough that occurs in sudden, uncontrollable bursts.
- High-pitched whooping sounds when breathing in after a coughing episode.
- Vomiting after a coughing spell.

Who gets parapertussis/holmesii?

Anyone at any age can get parapertussis or holmesii.

Is there a vaccine for parapertussis/holmesii?

No vaccine for parapertussis or holmesii exists. The pertussis vaccine does not protect against these diseases.

Is there a lab test for parapertussis/holmesii?

Yes. To test for parapertussis or holmesii, the nasal passages are swabbed. Nasal material on the swab is then examined in the lab for the presence of parapertussis or holmesii bacteria.

How are parapertussis and holmesii spread?

Parapertussis and holmesii are spread through the air in droplets produced during coughing or sneezing. A person can get parapertussis or holmesii when he or she is directly coughed at or sneezed on by someone with parapertussis or holmesii, or if he or she spends a lot of time close to a person who has parapertussis or holmesii.

What is the incubation period for parapertussis/holmesii?

The time period between exposure and the onset of illness is unknown. It may be seven to 10 days or as long as 21 days.

How long can a person spread parapertussis/holmesii?

Parapertussis and holmesii are probably most infectious (most likely to spread to others) early in the illness.

- A person with parapertussis or holmesii can probably spread the disease to others during the first three weeks of coughing.

- A person with parapertussis or holmesii cannot spread the disease to others if they have completed five days of antibiotic treatment or they are beyond the first three weeks of coughing.

Do persons with parapertussis/holmesii need to stay home from school or work?

Persons with parapertussis or holmesii do not need to stay home from school, work, or other activities because the illness is relatively mild. However, it is important to still cover your cough and wash your hands to prevent the spread of germs to others.

Can parapertussis/holmesii be treated?

These diseases can be treated with the same antibiotics as pertussis, but treatment may not cure the symptoms. Visit [Pertussis Treatment and Prophylaxis](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/pertussis/hcp/treatment.html) (www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/pertussis/hcp/treatment.html) for more information.

Preventive treatment is not generally recommended for contacts of people with parapertussis or holmesii. Preventive treatment may be considered for close contacts who are at a higher risk for more severe disease, including infants and immunocompromised people.

How can parapertussis/holmesii be prevented?

- Avoid close contact with others who are coughing or otherwise ill.
- Wash your hands often.
- Cover your cough and sneezes with a tissue, or cough and sneeze into your sleeve.

If you have questions or concerns, contact MDH at 651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414 or see [Pertussis \(Whooping Cough\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/pertussis/index.html) (www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/pertussis/index.html).

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5414.