

# Vaccine-Preventable Diseases in Wisconsin

## Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a bacterial infection spread through airborne saliva droplets. Initially, symptoms resemble a common cold, with a runny nose, low fever, or a mild cough. After about a week, the cough may worsen into severe fits, making breathing difficult and sometimes leading to vomiting. Some individuals may develop a distinctive "whooping" sound when coughing, while others may not.

**As of September 13, 2024, Wisconsin has 625 confirmed cases**, a significant rise from just 51 cases in 2023. Throughout our North Shore communities, eight cases involving children aged 4-17 have been reported over the last two months. North Shore Health Department is actively following up with all cases and their close contacts, in line with Wisconsin Department of Health Services (WDHS) protocol.

### How do I protect myself and my family from whooping cough?

- **Vaccination:** This is the best protection. Children should receive five doses of **DTaP** vaccine at 2, 4, 6, and 15 months, with a booster between 4 and 6 years. Teens should get the **Tdap** vaccine at 11 or 12 years.
- **Stay home:** If you're sick, stay home and avoid contact with vulnerable individuals like infants, older adults, and those with weakened immune systems.
- **Preventive antibiotics:** If you or a loved one has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, preventative antibiotics may be recommended to stop further spread.
- **Good hygiene:** Cover your mouth when coughing and wash your hands frequently.

For more information, please visit <https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/immunization/pertussis.htm>

## Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal disease includes meningitis (swelling of the tissues that cover the brain and spinal cord) and sepsis (blood infection). It is caused by bacteria that are spread through saliva, for example, when coughing, kissing, or sharing items that come in contact with the mouth (water bottles, utensils, lip balm, smoking materials). Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but it is most common in children under 5 years of age and young adults ages 16 through 23 years. **Wisconsin is experiencing an increase in meningococcal disease cases with six cases reported in 2024, five of which have been reported since June.**

### How do I protect myself and my family from meningococcal disease?

Vaccination with MenACWY and MenB containing vaccines is the best protection:

- **MenACWY** protects against meningococcal types A, C, W, and Y. The CDC recommends this vaccine for preteens at age 11–12 and a booster shot for teens at age 16.
- **MenB** protects against meningococcal type B. The CDC recommends this vaccine for people ages 16–23, especially those at high risk of meningococcal disease. Multiple doses are necessary for the best protection.

For more information, please visit <https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/invasive-bacteria/meningococcal-disease.htm>

North Shore Health Department may be able to provide vaccines to you or your children. Please call us at (414) 371-2980 or email us at [nshd@nshealthdept.org](mailto:nshd@nshealthdept.org) to see if you qualify.