

FLU, Cold or... PERTUSSIS?

(WHOOPIING COUGH)?

The Flu (influenza) is a contagious disease caused by respiratory viruses that mutate from year to year. Since most people have no immunity to new viruses, they cannot fight it, get sick, and begin to spread the flu. Most of the people who get the flu, will recover, but for some people, the flu can have serious implications. In this flu season we face another viral disease that is also highly contagious. We currently have an epidemic of Pertussis (Whooping cough) in California.

Pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough, is often mistaken for a common cold at first. As a result, people are usually unaware that they have the highly contagious illness and are infectious to others for up to 21 days. A typical case of pertussis in children and adults starts with a cough and runny nose for one-to-two weeks, followed by weeks to months of rapid coughing fits that sometimes end with a whooping sound. Fever, if present, is usually mild. The disease is treatable with antibiotics.

Public health officials from County of San Diego Health and Human

Services, HHS, have been asking everyone to become aware of the preventive measures against influenza and whooping cough (pertussis). Both illnesses are frequently passed from one person to another by coughing and sneezing into the air or by hand contamination.

“Vaccinations are the best protection against these two highly contagious diseases. We are encouraging parents to get vaccinated, and to make sure their children are fully immunized”, said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer.

Symptom	Influenza-Flu (viral)	Cold (viral URI)	Pertussis (bacterial)
Fever	Usually present, high (102-104°F or 38-41°C); lasts 3-4 days	Uncommon	Uncommon, but usually low-grade if present
Headache	Very common	Uncommon	Uncommon
Aches and pains	Common and often severe	Slight - moderate	Uncommon
Fatigue and weakness	Can last up to 14-21 days	Mild	Mild – moderate
Extreme exhaustion	Very common at the start	Never	Rare
Stuffy or Runny nose	Sometimes	Common	Common, early in the disease
Sneezing	Sometimes	Common	Common, early in the disease
Sore throat	Sometimes	Common	Uncommon
Cough	Non-productive (“dry”) cough is typical	Mild to moderate, hacking cough, often productive, usually resolves within 3-7 days. Usually responds to cough medications	Persistent cough, >1wk, of variable severity; can be very severe in infants and young children. Generally NOT responsive to cough medications
Severe attack of coughing	Uncommon	Rare	Common

The chart above was developed by The Public Health Department, Marinette County