Whooping Cough

Whooping cough is highly contagious; it usually affects infants and young children although adults can sometimes develop the condition. The condition is caused by bacteria, Bordetella pertussis. It is spread by droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is called whooping cough because the main symptom is a hacking cough often followed by a sharp intake of breath that sounds like a 'whoop'.

Whooping cough tends to develop in stages, with mild symptoms occurring first, (this is the most infectious period) followed by a period of more severe symptoms, before improvement begins. Whooping cough must be treated with antibiotics.

Early Symptoms may include:
- Runny nose or blocked nose
- Sneezing
- Watery eyes
- Dry cough, sore throat
- Slightly raised temperature

Second Stage/paroxysmal symptoms:
- Intense bouts of coughing that produces thick phlegm (usually 12-15 bouts of coughing a day)
- A whoop sound with each sharp intake of breath after coughing. (Although this may not occur in infants and young children.)
- Vomiting after coughing, especially in infants and young children
- Fatigue (tiredness) and redness in the face from the effect of coughing

Treatment:
- Whooping cough needs to be diagnosed by a Doctor
- Antibiotics are used to treat whooping cough it is important that the full course of treatment is taken
- Babies are affected most severely affected and may need hospital treatment
- Ensure plenty of rest and plenty of fluids

Prevention:
- Vaccination reduces the risk of whooping cough but remember immunity reduces over time so you need to have boosters
- Prompt treatment of suspected or confirmed cases to help reduce the spread
- Good hygiene is the most important and effective way of preventing the spread of the infection.

If your child has whooping cough please inform the nursery and keep them at home while they are unwell and have received at least 5 days of antibiotics.