

Whooping cough widespread in Britain

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A study has found that nearly 40 percent of British children examined by doctors for persistent coughing show symptoms of whooping cough infections.

The study, published Friday by the British Medical Journal Online, examined the cases of 172 children aged 5-16 years who visited general practitioners complaining of cough symptoms. Of those children, 37.2 percent showed evidence of a recent *Bordetella pertussis*, of whooping cough, infection, although 85.9 percent of those children have been fully immunized.

Previous studies had found that immunization was not completely effective in establishing lifelong immunity to the disease. However, doctors didn't commonly check for the disease, as it is generally regarded as restricted to very young children, the study's authors said.

The researchers recommended that doctors be more alert to possible pertussis infections, even in older children, as it would help many children to avoid incorrect diagnoses and improper medication.

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