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## Health Buzz: Whooping Cough Outbreak Worst in Years

By ANGELA HAUPT

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## Whooping Cough Outbreak Worst in Decades

Whooping cough is headed for its worst year since the 1950s. As of July, nearly 18,000 cases have been reported nationwide, more than twice as many as this time last year, according to government data. The outbreak is likely caused by problems with the effectiveness of the vaccine, officials say. Whooping cough is a highly contagious bacterial disease that's particularly dangerous to infants and kids. It leads to severe coughing that causes kids to make a whooping sound as they gasp for breath. It can be fatal; nine children have died this year. Health officials are encouraging adults—especially pregnant women and those who spend time around children—to get a booster shot. "It's most dangerous for babies," Anne Schuchat, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Preventions National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, told Reuters. "Preventing infant deaths from the disease is our primary national goal."

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## Sleep-Promoting (and Sleep-Stealing) Foods

Tossing and turning. Long, sleepless nights. They're draining, frustrating, and, well, exhausting—physically and mentally. And they're usually unnecessary, experts say, but can be counteracted by minor dietary tweaks. Indeed, what you put in your mouth can directly affect how many ZZZs come out. "The majority of people with day-to-day insomnia could be sleeping like puppies if they made just a few changes," says Jacob Teitelbaum, medical director of the Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Centers, which are located nationwide, and author of *From Fatigued to Fantastic*. "And if you know how to eat right? You're going to be way ahead of the game."

From cherries to almonds, consider these soothing, snooze-inducing foods:

1. Bananas. Make them a daily staple. They're packed with potassium and magnesium, nutrients that double as natural muscle relaxants. Plus, they contain the sleep-inducing amino acid tryptophan, which ultimately turns into serotonin and melatonin in the brain. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that

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promotes relaxation; melatonin is a chemical that promotes sleepiness. It takes about an hour for tryptophan to reach the brain, so plan your snack accordingly. [Read more: [Sleep-Promoting \(and Sleep-Stealing\) Foods](#)]

- [5 Weight-Loss Tricks That Don't Involve Dieting or \(Much\) Exercise](#)
- [How to Conquer Food Cravings](#)

#### How to Cope With Hypochondria

Headache? It must be a brain tumor. Bruise on your leg? Leukemia. Slightly nauseous? Either cancer or a heart attack.

Welcome to the life of a hypochondriac.

We've become a nation of them, says Catherine Belling, an assistant professor of medical humanities and bioethics at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. In her new book *A Condition of Doubt: The Meanings of Hypochondria* (Oxford University Press), she explores our increasing anxiety about our health, as well as the way hypochondriacs are perceived by the public and their doctors. "Hypochondria is not a mental illness, so much as it is an extremely irrational response to the uncertainty of medicine," she says. "We think of these people as silly, as demanding attention they don't really need. But no doctor can ever tell you that you're 100 percent healthy and will be forever. It causes a lot of misery and becomes a real nightmare for patients and doctors."

People who suffer from hypochondria make frequent doctors' appointments, insist on unnecessary tests, and see physical illness where medicine says there is none. They fret needlessly over diseases that procedures prove they don't have. They're obsessed with the idea that a disease is lurking, awaiting the right doctor and diagnosis. They experience ordinary discomforts more intensely than others, sinking often into a full-blown panic. They grow angry with physicians who fail to acknowledge sinister symptoms. [Read more: [How to Cope With Hypochondria](#)]

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*Angela Haupt is a health reporter for U.S. News & World Report. You can follow her on [Twitter](#) or reach her at [ahaupt@usnews.com](mailto:ahaupt@usnews.com).*

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