



28 August 2020

## NOTICE TO PARENTS re: Whooping Cough

Dear Parents,

A child attending **the infants section of North Kellyville Public School**, has been diagnosed with whooping cough (pertussis). Whooping cough is easily spread, especially between children. Information on whooping cough is included with this letter.

Whooping cough usually begins like a cold, with a runny nose, tiredness and sometimes a fever. A cough then develops that can be dry and persistent or can be 'bouts' of coughing followed by a deep gasp (or whoop). Young babies may have pauses or difficulty breathing. Sometimes people vomit after coughing.

In order to enhance **early detection and prevent further cases** of whooping cough the Public Health Unit requests the following:

- All parents please be on the lookout for symptoms of whooping cough, now and until the **14<sup>th</sup> of September 2020**.
- If your child has **any of the symptoms of whooping cough (including cough)**, **please see your doctor before returning to school**. If your child has symptoms of whooping cough, then testing (nose and throat swab) is recommended. Please take this letter with you when seeing your doctor. Please keep your child at home until the test results are known.
- If your child has whooping cough, please **inform the school** and **keep your child at home** until they have taken antibiotics for **at least five days** or until your doctor advises that they are no longer infectious.

Immunisation is the best defence against whooping cough. Children should be immunised against whooping cough at 2, 4, 6 & 18 months, and 4 & 12 years of age. Please see your doctor if your child has missed any of these vaccines.

If you require further information, please contact the Infectious Disease Team on 9840 3603 or check the NSW Health website

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/whoopingcough/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Crone  
Communicable Diseases Team

*Whooping cough affects people of all ages. It can be especially serious for babies. Vaccination reduces the risk of infection.*

# Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

Last updated: 20 October 2016

## What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough can be a life threatening infection in babies. Whooping cough in babies can lead to apnoea (pauses in normal breathing), pneumonia, feeding problems and weight loss, seizures, brain damage and, in some cases, death. Older children and adults can get whooping cough too and pass it on to babies.

## What are the symptoms?

- Whooping cough usually begins like a cold with a blocked or runny nose, tiredness, mild fever and a cough.
- The cough gets worse and severe bouts of uncontrollable coughing can develop. Coughing bouts can be followed by vomiting, choking or taking a big gasping breath which causes a "whooping" sound. The cough can last for many weeks and can be worse at night.
- Some newborns may not cough at all but they can stop breathing and turn blue. Some babies have difficulties feeding and can choke or gag.
- Older children and adults may just have a cough that lasts for many weeks. They may not have the whoop.

## How is it spread?

- Whooping cough is spread when an infectious person coughs bacteria into the air which can be inhaled by people nearby. If they are not treated early, people with whooping cough are infectious in the first three weeks of their illness.
- Whooping cough spreads easily through families, childcare centres and at school.

## Who is at risk?

- Anyone can get whooping cough. People living in the same household as someone with whooping cough are especially at risk.
- Immunisation reduces the risk of infection but immunity fades over time. You can still get whooping cough even if you've been immunised.

## How is it prevented?

Whooping cough vaccines provide good protection from infection but immunity fades which means that boosters are needed.

## Immunisation for babies

- Babies need to be immunised at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months and 18 months. The first dose can be given as early as 6 weeks of age.
- Getting your baby vaccinated on time gives them some protection when they are most at risk of severe illness.
- If your baby's vaccines are overdue, see your GP now to catch up.

## Immunisation for older children

- A whooping cough booster is needed at 4 years of age.
- Check if your child has been vaccinated. Look at their Blue Book, speak to your GP or ring the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register on 1800 653 809.
- A second whooping cough booster is given in high school through the NSW School –based Vaccination Program.

## Immunisation for adults

A booster for adults is recommended for:

- Women who are in the third trimester of pregnancy, preferably at 28 weeks. Free vaccine is provided in NSW through Gps and hospital antenatal clinics.
- Other adult household members, grandparents and carers of infants under 12 months of age.
- Adults working with young children, especially health care and child care workers.

## If you are a close contact of someone with whooping cough:

- If you have been exposed to someone with whooping cough early in their illness while they are infectious, watch out for symptoms and see your doctor if you get a new cough.
- Some babies and some pregnant women need antibiotics to prevent whooping cough infection if they have had significant contact with an infectious person.

## How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor may ask about your symptoms and whether there you've had any contact with whooping cough. If your doctor thinks you have whooping cough, a swab from the back of the nose or throat can confirm the diagnosis.

## How is it treated?

- Some babies may need treatment in hospital or in intensive care.
- Antibiotics are used to treat whooping cough in the early stages and can help prevent spreading whooping cough to others. People who are not treated early with the right antibiotics can spread the infection in the first 3 weeks of their illness. After 5 days of antibiotics, you are normally no longer infectious.
- The cough often continues for many weeks, despite antibiotics.

## What is the public health response?

Doctors and laboratories must confidentially notify cases of pertussis to the local Public Health Unit. Public Health Unit staff can advise on the best way to stop further spread.

Infectious children are restricted from going to pre-school and school. Unimmunised contacts may be excluded from child care unless they take the special antibiotics.

## Identify - Protect – Prevent

NSW Health whooping cough campaign <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/PublicHealth/Infectious/whoopingcough/index.asp>

For further information please call your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 or visit the New South Wales Health website [www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au)