

## Pertussis epidemic – Update

*Practice Manager: Please distribute to all GPs in your practice.*

### **Key points**

- 1. The Pertussis epidemic has continued during December with all age groups affected**
- 2. GPs are responsible for management of the case and household contacts**
- 3. GPs need to be aware of changes to Public Health protocols & recommendations**

### **Current epidemiology**

Over 8,000 cases of pertussis were notified in NSW residents in 2008, the highest annual number recorded since notification requirements were changed with the NSW Public Health Act 1991. To 28 December, 1564 cases were notified in 2008 in residents of South Eastern Sydney & Illawarra Health, of which 433 were notified **in December**.

December cases by GP Divisional area were Eastern Sydney, 15; South Eastern Sydney, 33; St George, 54; Sutherland, 86; Illawarra, 204; Shoalhaven, 41. All age groups have been affected with highest rates in 10-14 year olds.

### **Notification and response**

- GPs are reminded to **notify cases** to the Public Health Unit on 9382 8333 (Randwick) or 4221 6700 (Wollongong);
- Suspected cases should have Pertussis PCR if coughing for <4 wks, and serology if longer than this (serology not reliable in young children); **do not test those without symptoms**
- The Public Health Unit is actively following up with the **referring doctor** all cases diagnosed on PCR or culture and all cases aged 0-19 years;
- This follow up may be done by phone or fax due to the very large number of cases;
- Cases seen within 3 weeks of cough onset are still **infectious** and should be (i) treated with azithromycin (all ages), clarithromycin (except neonates) or erythromycin (except neonates), and (ii) excluded from contact with others;
- In order to prevent illness and death in infants, please **ask suspected cases if they have contact at home or work with any of the following:**
  - **babies** and children under 2 years of age who have not received 3 doses of DTPa,
  - women in the last month of pregnancy, or
  - other adults who work with babies, pregnant women or new mothers (eg childcare or healthcare workers);
- If the answer is **yes** to the above question, please ring the Public Health Unit regarding the need for these high-risk contacts to be prescribed prophylactic antibiotics.

### **Pertussis booster vaccination**

- Promote booster vaccination of parents prior to planned pregnancy or for new parents and grandparents;
- Booster vaccination is strongly recommended for childcare workers and health care workers, especially those working with babies and antenatal or postnatal patients.