



# NSW GP ALERT WHOOPING COUGH (pertussis)



Please distribute this information to all GPs and practice nurses

## 3 key points for GPs

1. Whooping cough is now widespread in NSW. Suspect whooping cough in anyone with a persistent cough.
2. Whooping cough affects people of all ages, even if immunised. Babies are at risk of severe disease.
3. The first DTPa for babies can be given at 6 weeks, with other vaccines that are scheduled for 2 months. Parents and carers should also have an adult whooping cough booster.

## IDENTIFY POSSIBLE CASES

- NSW continues to see large numbers of whooping cough notifications, especially in school-aged children. Whooping cough immunity wanes over time, some recent cases have been fully vaccinated.
- Cases classically present with bouts of coughing, following by an inspiratory whoop and vomiting, but older children and adults may just have a persistent bouts of coughing.
- Confirm the diagnosis by sending a nasopharyngeal swab for PCR. This is especially important for coughing adults and children who have contact with babies.

## PROTECT OTHERS, ESPECIALLY BABIES

### Infants

- Timely immunisation of infants is important because unvaccinated infants are at highest risk of infection and are also at high risk of complications. All vaccines given at 2 months can be given from 6 weeks of age.
- Advise new parents to vaccinate their baby on time and to keep their baby away from people with a cough.

### Older children & adults

- The scheduled fourth dose can be given from 3 ½ years of age.
- Because whooping cough immunity wanes, many older children and adults are susceptible and infect infants.
- **FREE** dTpa vaccine is still available for all new parents, grandparents and any other adults who will regularly care for infants under 12 months of age.

## PREVENT ITS SPREAD

- Whooping cough is easily spread within households, schools and childcare.
- Advise people with whooping cough to keep away from others and not attend school, childcare or work until no longer infectious. Cases are no longer infectious after 5 days of antibiotics or from 3 weeks after onset.
- Recommended antibiotics: azithromycin, clarithromycin or erythromycin (*Therapeutic Guidelines Antibiotic 2010*)
- Notify likely cases to your public health unit. The PHU can help prevent further spread in high risk settings.

## For more information, please call your local public health unit

Camperdown	02 9515 9420	Penrith	02 4734 2022	Broken Hill	08 8080 1499	Newcastle	02 4924 6477
Gosford	02 4349 4845	Randwick	02 9382 8333	Dubbo	02 6841 5569	Port Macquarie	02 6588 2750
Hornsby	02 9477 9400	Albury	02 6080 8900	Goulburn	02 4824 1837	Tamworth	02 6764 8000
Parramatta	02 9840 3603	Bathurst	02 6339 5601	Lismore	02 6620 7500	Wollongong	02 4221 6700

Whooping cough factsheet [www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/pertussis.html](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/pertussis.html)

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