

BEAT THE BUGS THIS WINTER

The illnesses to prepare for
and how to prevent them



TOPIC #4 Pertussis

Disease Snapshot

What to do if someone
has pertussis symptoms

Q&As

Information for your ELS
or school community

AN ARPHS
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Pertussis Disease Snapshot

What is it?

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a highly infectious disease that is spread by coughing and sneezing.

It's caused by bacteria which damage the breathing tubes, and can last up to three months.

A person with pertussis is likely to be infectious from the week before they start coughing until three weeks after the cough starts.

Widespread outbreaks occur every 3-5 years.

Who is at risk?

Pertussis can be very serious for babies and children. Infants aged under 12 months are at highest risk, especially if they have received fewer than three doses of vaccine and if the mother did not receive vaccine in pregnancy.

Young children can become very ill and even die from pertussis. If babies catch pertussis, they:

- May not be able to feed or breathe properly
- Can go blue and stop breathing with bad coughing bouts
- May become so ill they need to go to hospital
- Could end up with pneumonia (an infection in the lungs) or brain damage.

It is usually less severe in older children and adults but is still distressing for them.



Signs and symptoms

Whooping cough starts with a runny nose, fever and a dry cough. This cough turns into long coughing attacks.

In young children, the coughing attacks often end with a 'whoop' sound when the child breathes in. The child may also be sick or gag, and babies can even stop breathing.

How to prevent it

The best protection for infants is for their mother to be vaccinated during pregnancy (it's free and can be given from 16 weeks' gestation), followed by on-time immunisations (also free) for the infant at six weeks, three months and five months old.

Children are further protected with a booster at four years and 11 years old.

Most young children with whooping cough catch it from a parent, caregiver or older child, before they are old enough to be immunised against it. So it's also recommended that close family contacts of young infants, such as grandparents and fathers, have a booster dose of pertussis vaccine to reduce spread of the disease. It's important for older siblings to be up-to-date with their immunisations too.

Immunity wanes over time which means all adults are a potential source of infection for babies.

Breastfeeding does not provide direct effective protection against whooping cough.

Other steps to prevent the spread of pertussis include:

- Keeping your baby away from anyone with a cough.
- If you have a cough yourself, stay away from babies.
- If you've got a cough that won't go away, see your doctor.

Reducing the risk of pertussis

To protect your ELS and school communities, encourage staff and parents to check their own and their family's vaccination status – and to get immunised if they haven't already.

It's important you keep an up-to-date immunisation register for your children/ students if you are an ELS or primary school. This will speed up contact tracing if there's a case at your ELS or school.

Whooping cough/pertussis is easily spread. People with pertussis should not go to daycare, school, work or anywhere there are others who could catch the disease.

What to do if you get symptoms

If you are concerned about whooping cough call Healthline on 0800 611 116 or see your doctor as soon as possible. In an emergency, such as if an infant stops breathing, dial 111 for an ambulance.

There is no treatment for whooping cough. Antibiotics can be prescribed during the early stages to limit spread of the disease. They may reduce symptoms if given early enough.

To ease coughing spasms:

- Warm drinks may be soothing and help break the coughing spasm
- A humidifier in the bedroom may help (it must be cleaned every 2 or 3 days)
- Saline nose drops can help remove thick mucus
- Drink lots of clear fluids
- Avoid coughing triggers, such as cigarette smoke, perfumes or pollutants.

What happens if you are diagnosed with pertussis/whooping cough?

Whooping cough is normally treated with antibiotics at home.

The antibiotics may not cure you, but after five days of taking them - or after two days if the antibiotic is azithromycin - you will no longer be infectious, which prevents spread of the illness to others. Without antibiotics, you will still be infectious until three weeks after your intense bouts of coughing started.

Children and adults diagnosed with whooping cough are required to stay home until **one** of the following has occurred, either:

- 2 days (48 hours) have passed since treatment started (if Azithromycin used as an antibiotic); or
- 5 days have passed since treatment started if Erythromycin used; or
- 3 weeks have passed since the cough started (if no antibiotic treatment is given to prevent them spreading the infection to others).



Where to find more information

Healthline: 0800 611 116

a free, 24/7 service with interpreters available

Auckland Regional Public Health Service

www.arphs.health.nz/public-health-topics/disease-and-illness/whooping-cough-pertussis

Health Navigator

www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/w/whooping-cough

The Immunisation Advisory Centre

www.immune.org.nz/diseases/pertussis

The Ministry of Health

www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/whooping-cough

KidsHealth (A Starship Foundation and Paediatric Society of New Zealand website)

www.kidshealth.org.nz/whooping-cough

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Pertussis

What to do if someone has pertussis symptoms

If the person has symptoms such as a dry cough, runny nose and fever:

Send them home with a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) and ask them to do the test at home to rule out COVID-19.

IF POSITIVE

The person and their household will need to follow the standard guidelines and public health advice for COVID-19.

IF NEGATIVE, but they are still sick with the same symptoms

They should do another RAT 48 hours later. They can return to your school/ELS 24 hours after their symptoms end IF:

- They have no new symptoms
- They are feeling well, and
- Their RATs have been negative.

IF NEGATIVE, but their symptoms persist or they develop new or worsening symptoms:

They should continue to stay at home

They should immediately call Healthline (0800 611 116) or their family doctor/health provider for advice on what to do next.

If the person is tested and subsequently confirmed as having whooping cough/pertussis:

They will need to stay at home until one of the following has occurred, either:

- 2 days (48 hours) have passed since treatment started (if Azithromycin used as an antibiotic); or
- 5 days have passed since treatment started if Erythromycin used; or
- 3 weeks have passed since the cough started (if no antibiotic treatment is given to prevent them spreading the infection to others).

Public Health will work with you to identify any high risk children/adults who may need to take special action (e.g. staying in quarantine, starting antibiotics, getting vaccinated).

You should alert your school/ELS community. This allows people to be more vigilant for symptoms, check if they've been vaccinated against pertussis, and get vaccinated if they're not. You should not share the name or details of the person with whooping cough due to privacy.



More information

Healthline: 0800 611 116

KidsHealth

www.kidshealth.org.nz/whooping-cough

Auckland Regional Public Health Service

www.arphs.health.nz/public-health-topics/disease-and-illness/whooping-cough-pertussis

The Immunisation Advisory Centre

www.immune.org.nz/diseases/pertussis

Ministry of Health

www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/whooping-cough

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Pertussis Q&As

Will everyone have to stay home if we have a pertussis case at our ELS or school?

If you have a pertussis case at your school or ELS, Public Health will work with you to identify any high risk children or adults who may need to take special action (e.g. staying in quarantine at home, starting a course of antibiotics and/or getting vaccinated). Usually, very few contacts who are well need to stay at home, although some may be recommended to have antibiotics.

What should you do to prepare for pertussis at your ELS or school?

The most important thing to do is to get vaccinated if you are unimmunised, and encourage others to do the same.

Other steps you can take include:

- Updating your immunisation register if you are an ELS or primary school
- Encouraging staff and parents/caregivers to check whether they, their child and their whānau are immune:
 - Whooping cough vaccinations will be recorded in the person's Plunket or Well Child Tamariki Ora book, or they can check with their family doctor.
- Encouraging parents and staff to get the whooping cough vaccination if they haven't already.
- Make sure everyone's contact details are up to date, as you have done with COVID-19.
- Make sure people know to stay home if they are unwell.

How effective is the whooping cough vaccine?

Around 84% of babies are protected once they've completed 3 doses of vaccine (at 6 weeks, and 3 and 5 months of age).

Immunising against whooping cough during pregnancy protects about 90% of babies in their first few weeks of life.

Protection wanes over time. People can get whooping cough some years later, even if they've been immunised or have had it before. That's why it's important for 4 and 11-year-olds to have booster immunisations.



If we've had a pertussis case at our ELS or school, do we have to do any special cleaning?

Whooping cough spreads very easily by coughing or sneezing, or by touching a surface with infected saliva or mucus.

As is standard practice in preventing the spread of infectious diseases, it's important that you thoroughly clean frequently used surfaces such as tables, bench tops, door handles, light switches, toys and taps.

Advice on cleaning and the appropriate products to use is available: www.midcentraldhb.govt.nz/HealthServices/PublicHealth/healthprotection/Documents/MidCentral%20Public%20Health%20Service%20ECE%20Cleaning%20Guidelines.pdf

Do masks prevent the spread of pertussis?

Like many respiratory illnesses, pertussis spreads by coughing and sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the bacteria.

Immunisation offers the best protection against the illness.

Wearing a properly fitted mask may help reduce the risk of spread, along with practising good hygiene such as:

- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Putting used tissues in the bin.
- Coughing or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands, if you don't have a tissue.
- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose.
- Using an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available.



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Pertussis
For your ELS or
School Community

Information to share with your ELS or school community

Below is sample copy that you can include in communications with your school, kura, ELS, kohanga or language nest community (for example, via newsletters, email, social media or your website).

You may also wish to use extracts from elsewhere in this resource to inform your communications.

Beat the bugs: Put a halt to whooping cough

Every three to five years, Auckland experiences a widespread outbreak of whooping cough, also known as pertussis.

While there is no outbreak right now, the opening of our borders and the arrival of winter means we may see pertussis cases start to arise.

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a highly infectious disease that is spread by coughing and sneezing. It's caused by bacteria which damage the breathing tubes, and can last up to three months.

Pertussis can be very serious for babies and children. Young children can become very ill and even die from it.

Children younger than one-year-old are at highest risk, especially if they have received fewer than two doses of vaccine and if mum did not receive a vaccine during pregnancy.

It is usually less severe in older children and adults but is still distressing and can cause a cough that lasts for several months.

The good news is that an effective vaccination is available to protect against whooping cough.

So, keep your family safe from whooping cough (pertussis) this winter with these three tips from Auckland Regional Public Health Service:

1. Make sure you and your whānau are up to date with your immunisations.

The best protection for infants is for their mother to be vaccinated during pregnancy (the vaccine is free and can be given from 16 weeks' gestation), followed by on-time immunisations (also free) for the infant at six weeks, three months and five months old.

Immunising against whooping cough during pregnancy protects about 90% of babies in their first few weeks of life. And around 84% of babies are protected once they've completed 3 doses of vaccine (at 6 weeks, and 3 and 5 months of age).

Children are further protected with a (free) booster at four years and 11 years old.

If you're not sure whether you or your tamariki have been vaccinated, check with your doctor to see if it's on your medical records. Or check your Plunket or Wellchild Tamariki Ora book.

2. If you haven't been vaccinated, see your family doctor to be immunised as soon as possible.

Young children with whooping cough often catch it from a parent, caregiver or older child, before they are old enough to be immunised against it.

So it's also recommended that close family contacts of young infants, such as grandparents and fathers, have a booster dose of pertussis vaccine to reduce spread of the disease.

Immunity wanes over time which means all adults are a potential source of infection for babies.

It's important for older siblings to be up-to-date with their immunisations too.

3. Follow these steps to prevent the potential spread of whooping cough:

- Keep your baby away from anyone with a cough.
- If you have a cough yourself, stay away from babies.
- If you've got a cough that won't go away, see your doctor.
- Maintain good hygiene practices:
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
 - Put used tissues in the bin.
 - Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands, if you don't have a tissue.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose.
 - Use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available.
 - Wear a mask.

For more information

www.kidshealth.org.nz/whooping-cough