

# Information for people who have been in contact with someone with whooping cough (Pertussis)

Please visit your family doctor (GP) or visit the ARPHS website ([www.arphs.health.nz](http://www.arphs.health.nz)) if you have any further questions.

## What is whooping cough?

- Whooping cough (pertussis) is a bacterial infection that usually starts with a runny nose, fever, and dry cough. The cough gradually gets worse and last for weeks, often developing into long coughing attacks.
- In babies and young children, coughing attacks often end with a 'whoop' sound, with vomiting or gagging. The cough is often worse at night and disturbs sleep.
- Whooping cough spreads very easily from person to person through coughing and sneezing.

## What should contacts of whooping cough do?

- **Watch for signs of whooping cough**
- **See your family doctor if you begin to feel unwell.** Treatment early in the illness works best. Tell your doctor that you have been in contact with someone who has whooping cough.
- **Stay away from babies, children under 12 months, and pregnant women for 10 days** since you had contact with the person who had whooping cough. Most people begin to feel unwell 7-10 days after exposure. If you become unwell see your family doctor.
- A **course of appropriate antibiotics** (such as azithromycin) may decrease the risk of getting whooping cough
- Antibiotics are not 100% effective for preventing whooping cough but are strongly recommended for:
  - Children under 12 months, unimmunised or partially immunised children under 5 years, pregnant women in the third trimester, and anyone with a chronic illness or weak immune system
  - Anyone who lives or works with babies, young children, pregnant women or sick people (e.g. early childhood education workers, nurses, midwives, doctors)

## How can I protect myself and others from whooping cough?

Immunisation offers the best protection against whooping cough. It is never too late to be immunised.

- **On-time immunisation at six weeks, three months, and five months** is free from your family doctor and offers the best protection against whooping cough during the first year of life.
- **Booster immunisation at four years and 11 years** is free from your family doctors and protects your child during their school years. Check all of your children are up-to-date.

- **Immunisation in pregnancy** is free from your family doctor and should be given between 28 and 38 weeks of pregnancy. This will provide protection to the mother and her infant until baby is old enough to start their immunisations at six weeks.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes**, and keep away from babies and young children if you are coughing
- **Adult immunisation:** Whooping cough immunisation is available from GPs and some workplaces, although there may be a cost. It is especially recommended for:
  - Healthcare workers who work with/around infants or immuno-compromised individuals (may be funded by some employers) e.g. midwives, neonatal nurses/doctors, practice nurses.
  - Household and family contacts of newborns
  - Early childhood service workers

**If you think you or your child has whooping cough please see your doctor as soon as you can**

**For more help phone Healthline on 0800 611 116 or look on our website [www.arphs.govt.nz](http://www.arphs.govt.nz)**

**For more information on immunisation, please call the Immunisation Advisory Centre free on 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863) or visit their website <http://www.immune.org.nz>**

*Last reviewed November 2018*