

5 December 2017: Pertussis outbreak in Auckland -- call for vigilance with health providers

- **Auckland is experiencing a pertussis outbreak**
- **Maintain clinical vigilance for pertussis**
- **Promote pertussis vaccination to your patients particularly if there is a baby in the family**

Auckland Regional Public Health Service (ARPHS) has seen a large increase in pertussis (whooping cough) cases in Auckland over the last three months and the Ministry of Health has declared a national pertussis outbreak. Pertussis is particularly serious in young babies and the current strategy aims to protect this vulnerable group.

Health Providers should be vigilant regarding the following:

1. **Consider pertussis** in patients with a paroxysmal cough and especially children attending local primary schools or early childhood centres.
2. **Take a nasopharyngeal swab** for pertussis PCR (if coughing < 3 weeks and not already linked to another case).
3. **Exclude** cases from school, work, and social interaction while waiting for the laboratory results.
4. **Notify** ARPHS (09) 6234600 **on suspicion** ([Notification template](#)).
5. **Treat** confirmed cases with azithromycin ([NZF prescribing details](#)).
6. **Identify vulnerable contacts** (under 1 year of age, pregnant, immune-compromised) and provide azithromycin chemoprophylaxis.
7. **Recommend** pertussis vaccination to parents and pregnant mothers. Immunisation offers the best protection from pertussis.
8. **Recall** pregnant women for a funded pertussis booster in their last trimester.

See the [Guide to Pertussis Management](#) for more information on treatment, investigation, case and contact management.

On time vaccination (six weeks, three months, and five months) reduces the odds of hospitalisation for pertussis by four times in infants. Pertussis vaccination coverage for Auckland babies at eight months is excellent. However, the most recent figures from the Ministry of Health show only 81% of infants were fully immunised at six months, with lower coverage for Māori (65%) and Pacific (78%) infants.

RESOURCES

Pertussis resources and information is on the ARPHS website www.arphs.govt.nz and can be distributed to your patients.

Weekly Surveillance and Cumulative Charts

Weekly pertussis surveillance chart

