



# Whooping cough (pertussis)

## Information for Parents/ Caregivers

Whooping cough is a highly infectious disease, caused by bacteria. It is spread through coughing and sneezing. It is a serious childhood illness especially for babies and infants.

### What you should know

- **Newborn babies** are at most risk so **pregnant women** in their third trimester should seek treatment if they get whooping cough or are exposed to it.
- Older children and adults can get whooping cough too, which if not treated, may spread to young children.

### Symptoms

Whooping cough starts with a runny nose, fever and dry cough. After around one week the coughing usually gets worse and children can have coughing fits that end with a 'whoop' or vomiting. Young babies can be very sick with whooping cough and may need to be hospitalised.

### What you can do

- **If you think your child might have whooping cough**, see your doctor, nurse or health provider immediately. Keep your child at home, away from day care and other young children or babies.
- **On time immunisations** give babies the best protection.
  - Whooping cough immunisations are given at 6 weeks, 3 months and 5 months. Boosters are due at 4 years, 11 years, 45 years and 65 years.
  - See your doctor, nurse or health provider if your child needs to catch-up their immunisations.
  - All pregnant women can get a free whooping cough immunisation in the second and third trimester of their pregnancy.
- **Staying home from day care** - children and staff diagnosed with whooping cough need to stay home until they have had antibiotics for 2 to 5 days depending on the antibiotic prescribed. If they are not treated, they will need to stay home until 3 weeks after the cough started.

For more information, call the Immunisation Advisory Centre on 0800 IMMUNE (466 863) or visit the Toi Te Ora Public Health website: [www.toiteora.govt.nz/public/whooping-cough](http://www.toiteora.govt.nz/public/whooping-cough)