



## Whooping cough (pertussis) Information for Early Learning Services/ Kōhanga Reo

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. You can help to contain the spread of whooping cough in the following ways:

### **Ensure that your Immunisation Register is up to date**

This will help Early Learning Services (ELS) staff work with public health officials if there is an outbreak at the centre.

### **Be alert to children displaying 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, have trouble feeding and breathing, and often need to be hospitalised.

**If you think a child at your ELS may have whooping cough**, please advise the parents to have their child seen by a doctor, nurse or health provider immediately. The test for whooping cough is carried out easily with a special nose swab.

**If a child or staff member is diagnosed with whooping cough** by their doctor, nurse or health provider they need to stay at home until they have completed two to five days of antibiotic treatment depending on the antibiotic prescribed. If they are not treated with antibiotics, they need to stay home until three weeks after their cough first began. People may still continue to cough once the infectious periods have passed.

### **What your centre can do to help stop whooping cough**

- **Tell parents or carers about whooping cough** – please share the information sheet titled *Whooping cough (pertussis) Information for Parents/Caregivers*, with all parents at your ELS.
- **Promote coughing etiquette** – use tissues to cover coughs and sneezes and throw the tissues away afterwards.
- **Staff immunisation** – the Ministry of Health recommends adult immunisation for all staff at ELS. This is a booster dose given every 10 years. Staff can get vaccinated by their doctor, nurse or health provider. Free boosters are available at 45 years and 65 years. For boosters given at other times, there will be a cost.
- **Hand washing** – encourage frequent hand washing with soap and water for 20 seconds. Ensure hands are thoroughly dried afterwards.

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