

Information for whooping cough (pertussis) contacts

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a very infectious disease that is spread by coughing and sneezing. It can be dangerous for babies and children, especially those under one year of age.

If you've been in close contact with someone who has whooping cough you may have caught it from them. You should watch out for symptoms. You will need to take extra precautions if you live or work with people at risk of becoming very unwell from whooping cough, or if you may be vulnerable yourself.

1

WATCH FOR SIGNS OF WHOOPING COUGH



Cough



Fever



Runny nose

Whooping cough usually starts with a dry cough, fever and a runny nose. The cough gradually gets worse and can last for weeks, often developing into long coughing attacks.

If you start to feel unwell contact your doctor, or call Healthline for free anytime on 0800 611 116. Tell them you've been in close contact with someone who has whooping cough when you call.

2

PROTECTING OTHERS – AVOID PEOPLE AT HIGH RISK

If you develop whooping cough symptoms it's very important you stay away from early learning services, school, work and community gatherings.

If you live or work with any vulnerable groups you will be given antibiotics that will reduce the risk of you passing on the illness if you have it. If you don't take antibiotics you will need to avoid contact with vulnerable groups for 14 days, starting from when you last had contact with the person with whooping cough. If you need to stay home from work public health can provide a letter for your employer.

Vulnerable groups include:

- babies and children under 12 months old
- children and adults who live with, or spend much of their time around a child under 12 months old, including in health care, at school or at an early learning service
- pregnant women (particularly in the last month of pregnancy)
- people with chronic illnesses

Even if you have taken antibiotics, you will need to avoid contact with these groups if you have any symptoms at all.

3

GETTING EMERGENCY HELP

Call 111 if your baby or child is turning blue in the lips, mouth or face when coughing, or has stopped breathing (even for a small amount of time). Call 111 for an adult if they have difficulty breathing.

4

IF YOU OR YOUR WHĀNAU ARE AT HIGHER RISK

Antibiotics can reduce the risk of getting whooping cough. You are likely to be offered antibiotics by public health if you are in a vulnerable group. This includes:

- babies and children under 12 months old
- children and adults who live with, or spend much of their time around a child under 12 months old, including in health care, at school or at an early learning service
- pregnant women (particularly in the last month of pregnancy)
- people with chronic illnesses

You may also be offered immunisation if you have not had all your vaccination doses (including boosters), or if there isn't any record of you having your vaccination doses. This will provide you with added protection against whooping cough.

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Immunisation offers the best protection against whooping cough. You and your whānau can catch up and be immunised.

The whooping cough vaccine is free for:

- children and young people under 18
- pregnant women from 16 weeks of their pregnancy (in every pregnancy)
- people at higher risk of becoming very unwell from whooping cough
- adults aged 45 and over if they previously missed any routine whooping cough immunisation doses or boosters
- adults aged 65 and over

Babies should be given the whooping cough vaccine at six weeks, three months and five months old, as part of the Immunisation Schedule. Boosters are also given to children at four and 11 years old.

Speak to your doctor about you and your whānau getting the vaccine.



For more information visit:
info.health.nz/whooping-cough