

# Information for people with whooping cough (Pertussis)

Please read this information carefully and follow the advice below.

## What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough is a highly infectious bacterial disease that is easily spread by coughing and sneezing.

It commonly causes bouts of severe coughing that can disturb sleep and can last for up to three months. It can be especially severe in young infants under 12 months old, causing pneumonia and difficulty breathing.

The disease is usually milder in teenagers and adults, however some will get pneumonia, and severe coughing can cause sleep disturbance, incontinence, vomiting, and broken ribs.

**It is important that you follow advice from your doctor and remain isolated at home until you are no longer infectious to prevent others getting the disease (especially babies).**

## Important Emergency Information for Children with Whooping Cough

If your baby is turning blue in the lips, mouth or face when coughing, or has stopped breathing even for a small amount of time see a doctor immediately. Children need to complete all of their whooping cough immunisations even if they have had whooping cough in the past.

## How you can protect others from whooping cough?

- **Stay at home until you are no longer infectious**
  - you will be infectious from the **time you became unwell, with a runny nose and fever, until three weeks after the start of your bad coughing attacks**
  - if you are unsure, check with your doctor
- **Complete a full course of antibiotics** – after five days of a course of antibiotics you will no longer be able to pass whooping cough on to others, although you will probably still be coughing. Finishing all of the antibiotics the doctor prescribed is important to stop the infection coming back.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes** – use tissues and throw used tissues away in the rubbish
- **Wash and dry your hands frequently** with soap, warm water and a clean towel. Wash your hands for 20 seconds and then take 20 seconds to dry your hands really well
- **Immunise** – immunisation offers the best protection against whooping cough. Ensure all of the children in your whanau/family are up to date with their immunisations. Pregnant women can receive the immunisation at no cost; other adults can also receive immunisation from their GP although a fee may apply.

- **Stay home** away from babies, young children, pregnant women, people with a chronic illness or weakened immune system, early childhood education centres, school, work, and social gatherings until one of the following has occurred;
  - 2 days (48 hours) since treatment started if Azithromycin used as an antibiotic; or
  - 5 days since treatment started if other antibiotic used; or
  - 3 weeks from the start of cough if no antibiotic treatment is given to prevent them spreading the infection to others.

### Inform your close contacts

- You only need to have **face to face contact with someone for one hour or more** to pass on whooping cough
- A course of antibiotics for close contacts can reduce the risk of them getting whooping cough themselves
- **Tell all those you have been in contact with** for more than one hour face to face that you have whooping cough
- **If any of your contacts are now unwell**, they should see their doctor as soon as they are able. They should let their doctor know that they have been exposed to whooping cough
- **It is most important to inform** those who are more at risk of severe disease or who may put others at risk. These people are advised to speak with their doctor about taking a course of antibiotics:
- **Babies, young children, pregnant women, those over 65 years, anyone with a chronic illness or weak immune system**
- **Anyone who works with babies, young children, pregnant women or sick people** (e.g. early childhood education workers, nurses, midwives, doctors)
- If your child with whooping cough attends daycare, kohanga, preschool, or school **inform their management** that your child has whooping cough

### **Whooping cough is widespread in the Auckland region Immunisation offers the best protection against whooping cough**

For more information on whooping cough, phone Healthline on 0800 611 116, visit your doctor or visit the ARPHS website at: <https://www.arphs.health.nz/public-health-topics/disease-and-illness/whooping-cough-pertussis/>

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

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