

# Whooping Cough

## Information



Dear Parents,

### **PERTUSSIS (WHOOPING COUGH)**

Even though your child/children may be fully vaccinated, it would be advisable to watch out for the symptoms of pertussis in your child, especially over the next three weeks.

#### **What is pertussis?**

Pertussis is an infection of the throat that can cause bouts of coughing, and sometimes breathing difficulties and vomiting. It can be a very serious infection in small children. The illness can last for many weeks. It usually starts with a snuffle or a cold.

#### **What should you do if you suspect your child has pertussis?**

If your child develops symptoms of pertussis, please take your child to your local doctor as soon as possible. Your doctor can arrange for your child to be tested and given early antibiotic treatment if necessary. Treating people who have pertussis with antibiotics can stop the infection spreading and is more effective if treatment is started early. To help prevent this infection spreading, children who are diagnosed with pertussis should not attend school until they have completed the first 5 days of a course of the recommended antibiotics. If antibiotics cannot be taken, they must stay away for 3 weeks after onset of the cough.

#### **How is pertussis prevented?**

Vaccination is the most important way to prevent pertussis so it is important to double check that your child is fully up to date with his or her vaccinations. For children in Kindy they should have received 3 doses of a pertussis containing vaccine at 2, 4, and 6 months of age, followed by a booster dose at 4 years of age. If in doubt, the vaccination status of your child can be obtained by phoning the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) on 1800 653 809 (free call), or your school should have a record of your child's immunisation record.

**Pregnant women are scheduled to receive a pertussis containing vaccine in the last trimester of pregnancy. This is available FREE from a doctor.** Parents and grandparents of babies and toddlers should also consider being immunised against pertussis infection. This is a single booster dose for adults. Adults who have been immunised previously require a booster vaccination every 10 years to help prevent the spread of Whooping Cough. Discuss this with your doctor.

#### **Need more information?**

For additional information, visit [www.public.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au). You can also phone the North Metropolitan Public Health Unit on 9222 8588 during business hours to speak with a staff member, or discuss this further with your doctor, school nurse, or community nurse.

Mary Blechynden  
Principal