



1 May 2018

Dear Parents,

We have been notified of a confirmed case of whooping cough (pertussis) in your community. This is an infectious disease, and your child may be at risk.

Symptoms

Symptoms usually start around 7 to 10 days after contact with someone with whooping cough. The first symptoms are like a cold; a runny nose, tiredness, mild cough and watery eyes. Then the child gets the nasty cough that may sound like a “whoop” typical of whooping cough. The whooping sound is not always present. This cough can last for weeks or months. Children sometimes vomit after each bout of coughing.

Hygiene measures

As with any infectious disease, personal hygiene measures are important in preventing the spread of infection. Remember to cover the nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing, wash hands well with soap and water (and dry them) and dispose of used tissues.

Who is most at risk?

Pregnant women and babies under 1 year of age are at most risk of severe illness from whooping cough. Women nearing the end of their pregnancies are advised to visit their GP for vaccination to protect themselves, as well as protecting their newborn babies over the first vulnerable weeks and months of life.

What to do if your child becomes unwell

Should your child become unwell, please keep them away from daycare or school, and take them to their GP. Take this letter with you. Let your GP know that your child may have been in contact with someone with pertussis.

Immunisation

We strongly recommend all children are immunised against pertussis, and please consider this urgently if your child is unimmunised, or has had less than the usual number of immunisations against whooping cough. Immunisation is the best form of protection.

Adults who come in contact with young children or pregnant women at home or through their work should consider vaccination against whooping cough. This will help prevent infection of pregnant women and babies – the two most vulnerable groups for severe illness with whooping cough. Your GP will be able to give advice on the best options for you.

More information

You can find more information on the Ministry of Health website <http://www.health.govt.nz/yourhealth-topics/diseases-and-illnesses/whooping-cough>

If you have any questions please discuss with your family doctor or phone the Public Health Nurse at your school.

Yours sincerely

Virginia McLaughlin

Medical Officer of Health

Public Health Unit

Northland District Health Board

Additional Information about Gastroenteritis

We are aware of reports of gastroenteritis within the wider community. If you or your child has vomiting or diarrhoea then you should exclude them or yourself from work/school *until symptom free for 48 hours*. Please consult your usual health care provider for review.

IMMUNISATION IS IMPORTANT – did you know that...

New Zealand experienced a major pertussis outbreak, peaking from August 2011 to December 2013, resulting in the hospitalisation of hundreds of infants aged under one year, and the death of three unimmunised children, including two infants too young to be immunised. We are due for another outbreak.

**IF YOUR CHILD IS NOT UP TO DATE WITH THEIR VACCINATIONS - IMMUNISE NOW !
PROTECT THEM AND THE COMMUNITY !**

