

## INFORMATION ABOUT WHOOPING COUGH

Kia ora

A person at has been identified as having whooping cough (pertussis). There is a small chance students and staff may have whooping cough if they have been near this infectious person.

While the risk is low, please watch for whooping cough symptoms in your child, or as a staff member. This is especially important if you have a baby under 12 months in your household, as they can become seriously ill from whooping cough.

### **What are the whooping cough symptoms?**

Whooping cough is a bacterial infection that causes coughing fits.

### **Early symptoms usually include a runny nose, fever, and dry cough.**

The cough gradually gets worse and lasts for 8-12 weeks, often developing into long coughing attacks. In babies and young children, coughing attacks often end with a 'whoop' sound as they take a breath, or with vomiting or gagging.

### **Who can get whooping cough?**

Anyone can get whooping cough. Even if you have been immunised or had whooping cough before, you can still get it. Generally a person needs to be in face-to-face contact with an infectious person for more than one hour.

Vaccination reduces the risk of a serious infection of whooping cough and also of hospitalisation. It also helps prevent you passing the disease to others even if you catch it.

### **What to do if you develop any early signs of whooping cough**

If you or your child have any of the symptoms (above) or a cough lasting for more than two weeks:

- **Stay home from school** while unwell;
- **Keep away from babies under 12 months old, pregnant women and people with a weak immune system (immunocompromised)** while unwell;
- **Call Healthline** for free anytime 24/7 on 0800 611 116; they may advise you to see your health care provider for further assessment.

### **Immunisation is the best way to protect against whooping cough**

Whooping cough immunisation for children is offered for FREE at 6 weeks, 3 months, 5 months, 4 years and 11 years. If you are not sure of your immunity, check with your GP or practice nurse. Boosters are available for adults at 45 years and 65 years of age.

It's also important pregnant women get immunised, as it helps protect both mother and baby. Immunisation is recommended every time you are pregnant.

### **Cover coughs and sneezes**

Anyone with symptoms should cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze, throw away used tissues, and wash and dry hands well afterwards. This helps prevent illnesses from spreading.

**Where can you get more information?**

More information on whooping cough is available on [www.info.health.nz](http://www.info.health.nz). For health advice contact your doctor or usual hauora provider, or you can call Healthline for free anytime on 0800 611 116.

Ngā mihi,

**Medical Officer of Health**

**Health NZ | Te Whatu Ora**

**National Public Health Service – Northern Region**

[TeWhatuOra.govt.nz](http://TeWhatuOra.govt.nz)

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**Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government