

What about spread to others?

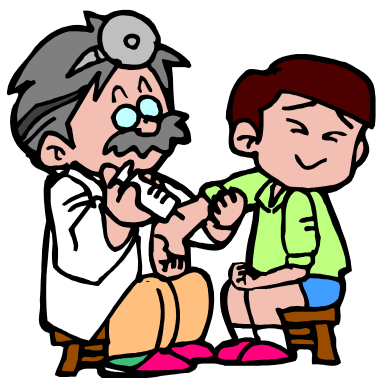
Immunisation is the most effective means of preventing the disease and controlling it in the community.

Vaccinations are given as part of the National Childhood Immunisation Schedule at the ages of:

- 6 weeks
- 3 months
- 5 months
- 4 years
- 11 years

These are given free by your local doctor.

Immunised children may still develop whooping cough but it is usually not as severe.



Other resources available on childhood illnesses:

- Rotavirus
- Impetigo
- Hand, foot and mouth disease
- Ringworm
- Slapped cheek disease
- Conjunctivitis
- Threadworms

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Communicable Diseases
Community and Public Health

(a division of the Canterbury District Health Board)
October 2011

Code/Reference: MED00017

Authorised By: Resource Approval Panel

Whooping Cough (Pertussis)



Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora ō Waitaha

What is Whooping Cough?

Whooping cough is an infectious disease of the airways caused by a bacteria (*Bordetella pertussis*).

It can affect persons of any age and is particularly serious, occasionally life-threatening, for children aged under 1 year.

It is spread by coughing and usually develops within 20 days of coming into contact with the disease.

What are the symptoms?

The disease often begins with the same symptoms as a 'cold', along with an irritating, persistent cough which gets worse and may last for several weeks.

Bouts of coughing result in breathlessness which causes the characteristic 'whoop' on breathing in. This may be associated with vomiting. Adults and infants may not have the 'whoop'.

Diagnosis is confirmed by a swab from the back of the nose or a blood test.

How is it caught?

Whooping cough is caught from the secretions from the airways of an infected person and by droplets produced by coughing or sneezing.

A person is infectious for 3-4 weeks from the onset of the first symptoms.

How is it treated?

An antibiotic (erythromycin) if given early, can shorten the infectious period and reduce symptoms.

If whooping cough is suspected, the person should be seen by a doctor and kept away from others.

They should be off work, school or preschool until they have taken at least 5 days of a 14 day course of the antibiotic.

If the antibiotic is not given the person should be kept away from others for 3 weeks from the onset of the cough.

Your own doctor can advise about treatment of symptoms. The cough is often distressing for preschoolers but bed rest, plenty of fluids and small bland meals can be helpful in management and may lessen trigger factors for the cough.

Keep in contact with your doctor especially if the illness persists.

How is spread prevented?

Antibiotic treatment for people who have been in contact with whooping cough is aimed at preventing spread to under one year olds who are more likely to develop severe disease.

- When a case occurs in a household where there is an infant under one year (who is not the case) all persons in the household should take a 7 day course of erythromycin
- When a case occurs in a child care centre, close contacts under one year of age and close contacts who themselves have contact with children under one, require a 7day course of erythromycin
- When a case occurs in a household where there is a woman in the late stage or pregnancy, all persons in that household should also receive a 7 day course of erythromycin to prevent possible future spread to the newborn infant

