



## Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

### Information for Schools

New Zealand periodically experiences whooping cough (pertussis) outbreaks. The most recent outbreak started in 2011 and continued through to 2013. Whooping cough continues to circulate in the community between outbreaks so it is important to reiterate key information.

#### Whooping Cough Information and Advice

Whooping cough is a serious and highly infectious disease and is spread through the community by coughing and sneezing. While it can be a significant illness in all age groups, it can be particularly serious in babies and children under one year old.

The following advice is provided to help protect you, your family and those around you:

1. Immunisation against whooping cough is the best prevention, so students are encouraged to be up-to-date with their immunisations. It is never too late to catch up.
2. It is especially important for parents to ensure babies are given their first immunisations on time (at 6 weeks, 3 months and 5 months of age). Boosters are given at 4 and 11 years. These immunisations are all part of the routine immunisations for children and are free.
3. If a student has any of the following symptoms, they should see their GP:
  - a cough lasting more than 2 weeks; or,
  - sudden coughing attacks especially if they end in vomiting, breathlessness, or a 'whoop' sound.
4. People with whooping cough are infectious until they have had antibiotics for 5 days - or, if not treated, until 3 weeks after the cough started. During this infectious period a student with whooping cough:
  - should not attend school; and,
  - take care, where possible, to avoid contact with women in the late stages of pregnancy (because of the possible risk to their newborns), babies and young children.
5. It is important to remember to cover your cough and not to cough on, or near, babies. Good hand hygiene is always beneficial in helping prevent spread of illnesses.
6. Whooping cough immunisation in the later stages of pregnancy helps to protect newborns. Pregnant women are encouraged to discuss this option with their GP or lead maternity carer.

For more information, phone 0800 IMMUNE (466 863) or visit the Toi Te Ora - Public Health Service website: [www.ttophs.govt.nz/whooping\\_cough](http://www.ttophs.govt.nz/whooping_cough)