

Advice for all families and staff

The Public Health Unit has been notified of a confirmed case of whooping cough (also called pertussis) in a person attending your school. This child is fully immunised.

Please be vigilant and watch out for the symptoms. Even fully immunised children and adults may get whooping cough, perhaps with mild symptoms and not appearing 'unwell'. However, they could inadvertently spread the infection to a young baby who could then face a life threatening illness.

Pertussis is a highly contagious bacterial disease that can be readily spread by direct contact with droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person. Pertussis can cause bouts of coughing, and sometimes breathing difficulties and vomiting. **Immunised children and adults may just have a mild cough or a 'tickle' in their throat that doesn't go away and that may last for many weeks.**

In order to limit the spread of disease the Public Health Unit recommends the following:

1. That you please remain alert for symptoms and if you or your child develop any symptoms, no matter how mild, **please consult your doctor, taking this letter with you.** A pathology test may be required. (Nasopharyngeal or throat swab is the preferred specimen). **Anyone being tested for whooping cough should stay at home from child care, school or work until the result is known. You and your doctor may choose to start antibiotics immediately, not waiting for the result.**
2. If you are diagnosed with whooping cough, please **remain** at home until you have completed at least five days of the recommended antibiotic treatment.

Immunity to whooping cough from immunisation or infection is not life lasting. It is therefore important to seek medical attention if you develop a cough even if full immunised.

Please note:

It is not uncommon for someone diagnosed with whooping cough to report multiple visits to their doctor, being diagnosed with a 'viral' illness or 'hay fever' or advised it is 'just their asthma' before a test for whooping cough is requested. This delay in diagnosis increases the risk that a vulnerable infant may be exposed. Remember, whooping cough can kill young babies.

See the following link for more information

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/whoopingcough/Pages/default.aspx>

This link has information in numerous languages

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/whoopingcough/Pages/factsheet.aspx>

or call the Infectious Disease Surveillance Officer at the Public Health Unit on 02 6080 8900