



Enquiries to: Pilbara Public Health 9174 1660

Dear Parents/Caregivers

Alert: Pertussis

11th of July 2024

There have been multiple cases of pertussis (whooping cough) notified across the region since 1 June 2024. There has been an increase of whooping cough across the state and Australia broadly.

Whooping cough is a bacteria that can be life threatening for babies. It can lead to apnoea (pauses in breathing), pneumonia, feeding problems and weight loss, seizures, brain damage and, in some cases, death. Older children and adults get whooping cough too and can pass it on to babies. The virus is passed from one person to another by coughing and sneezing. If they are not treated early, people with whooping cough are infectious in the first three weeks of their illness. It spreads easily through families, childcare centres, and schools.

Symptoms of whooping cough usually begin like a cold with a blocked or runny nose, tiredness, mild fever, and cough.

- The cough gets worse and severe bouts of uncontrollable coughing can develop.
- Coughing bouts can be followed by vomiting, choking, or taking a big gasping breath which causes a 'whooping' sound. The cough can last for many weeks and can be worse at night.
- Older children and adults may just have a cough that lasts for many weeks. They may not have the whoop.

The WA Immunisation Schedule offers free immunisations for infants and children at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 18 months, and four years of age. Adolescents are provided with a booster in high school and women during pregnancy. A booster dose is also recommended for adults who are planning pregnancy, and other adult household members or carers of infants under 12 months of age.

Close contacts should watch out for symptoms and see their doctor if they get a new cough. Some babies and pregnant women may need antibiotics to prevent whooping cough infection if they have had significant contact with an infectious person.

Diagnosis is made by the doctor obtaining a swab from the back of the nose. Antibiotics are used to treat whooping cough in the early stages and can help prevent spreading whooping cough to others.

If a parent or guardian is concerned that their child might have symptoms of whooping cough, they should not send them to school, childcare, visit other households, or have community interaction. Parents and guardians are recommended to see their general practitioner for assessment and testing.

For further information, please visit the Healthy WA website:
[Whooping cough \(pertussis\) \(healthywa.wa.gov.au\)](https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au)

Kind Regards,

Simon Slota-Kan

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