

Whooping cough alert: FREE vaccine for parents

Dear Parent / Carer

Keeping young babies healthy is a priority for new parents and carers. And the State Government is committed to helping parents and carers do everything they can to ensure newborn babies are happy and healthy.

You may be aware there is currently an outbreak of whooping cough (also called pertussis) in many parts of Australia, including Queensland.

Whooping cough in babies can cause severe health problems, from coughing, vomiting, pneumonia and seizures to, in some cases, permanent disability or death. The infection is spread easily by coughing and the most common source of infection in babies is from a parent, brother or sister.

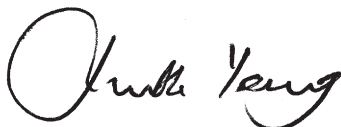
To better protect the most vulnerable babies in our community, parents of infants born **on or after 1 May 2009 can receive a free booster dose of whooping cough vaccine**. The vaccine is available from your doctor now, for a limited time. Most babies too young to be vaccinated catch the illness from their parents or carers. One of the most important things you can do to protect them is to make sure your vaccinations are up-to-date.

Other important ways to protect your baby from whooping cough are:

- 1. Ensure your baby is vaccinated on time.** Your baby will have the best protection after they have received all three doses of vaccine at two, four and six months of age.
- 2. Keep your baby away from anyone with a cough.**
- 3. Ensure other children in your household are up-to-date with their whooping cough vaccines.** Vaccination is recommended for babies at two, four and six months of age, a booster dose at four years of age and a second booster for Year 10 students as part of the School Based Vaccination Program.
- 4. Make sure you, and anyone who cares for your child (such as grandparents and childcare providers), have had a booster vaccine for whooping cough.** This can be obtained by asking your immunisation provider for a prescription to buy the vaccine from a pharmacy (unless eligible as above).

Anyone with symptoms of whooping cough should see their doctor for diagnosis and treatment as early treatment can help prevent the infection spreading. For more information about whooping cough and recommended vaccinations, ask your doctor, contact 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or see overleaf.

Yours sincerely



Dr Jeannette Young
Chief Health Officer

27 / 7 / 2009

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checklist

Protect your baby from whooping cough

- Vaccinate your baby on time.
 - 1st dose (two months of age)
Next vaccination due:
 - 2nd dose (four months of age)
Next vaccination due:
 - 3rd dose (six months of age)
Next vaccination due:
- Ensure all children in your household are up-to-date with their whooping cough vaccinations (including the childhood booster vaccine for children at four years of age).
 - To check your children's vaccination status, have a look at their Personal Health Record, contact your doctor or phone the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register on 1800 653 809 (for children less than seven years of age).
- See your doctor or immunisation provider to get vaccinated as soon as possible after the birth of your baby.
 - **For a limited time, parents of infants born on or after 1 May 2009 can receive a free adult booster dose of whooping cough vaccine. See your doctor now.**
- Encourage other adults in your household and those who care for your baby (such as grandparents and childcare providers) to get vaccinated.
 - Vaccine can be bought from a pharmacy with a prescription provided by a doctor. The vaccine should be administered by an immunisation provider immediately after purchase. Vaccines need to be kept at a specific temperature for them to work (eg. they shouldn't be left in a car or stored in your home fridge).

For more information on whooping cough and vaccination, contact your doctor, 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84), or your local Population Health Unit. A copy of a whooping cough brochure for new parents is also available at http://www.health.qld.gov.au/ph/documents/cdb/whooping_cough_broch.pdf

Whooping cough (or pertussis) is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by bacteria (germs). It can affect babies, children and adults.

For adolescents and adults the infection may only be a persistent cough, however for young children whooping cough can be life threatening. The cough can obstruct a baby's breathing and they may lack oxygen and become blue.

The bacteria are spread by an infected person coughing or sneezing.

Symptoms may include:

- runny nose and sneezing early in the illness
- an irritable, dry cough that gets worse
- coughing spasms that can end with a loud gasp (a "whooping sound")
- vomiting after a coughing spasm
- older children and adults may just have a cough that doesn't go away

To help prevent the spread of infection, see your GP as soon as possible if you, your baby or anyone in your household has symptoms of whooping cough.

Population Health Units

Brisbane Northside	3624 1111
Brisbane Southside	3000 9148
Cairns	4050 3600
Darling Downs	4631 9888
Gold Coast	5509 7222
Hervey Bay	4120 6000
Mount Isa	4744 4846
Mackay	4968 6611
Redcliffe	3142 1800
Rockhampton	4920 6989
Sunshine Coast	5409 6600
Townsville	4753 9000

