


<p>Auckland Regional Public Health Service Rātonga Hauora ā Iwi o Tamaki Makaurau</p>  <p>Working with the people of Auckland, Counties Manukau and Waitemata</p>	<p>Auckland Regional Public Health Service Cornwall Complex, Floor 2, Building 15 Greenlane Clinical Centre, Auckland Private Bag 92 605, Symonds Street, Auckland 1035, New Zealand Telephone: 09 623 4600 Facsimile: 09 630 7431 Website: www.arphs.govt.nz</p>
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Dear parents of children of Willowbank School,

There has been a confirmed case of Pertussis (Whooping cough) at Willowbank School. You have been sent this letter because your child may have been exposed, and therefore may develop the illness. This letter provides you with background information and advice on what to do.

General Information about Pertussis (Whooping cough)

What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough is a highly infectious disease caused by bacteria that are spread by coughing and sneezing, in the same way as colds and influenza spread through a community.

Whooping cough can affect people of all ages. Young children, especially babies under six months, can be extremely ill and the illness can sometimes be fatal in this age group. Older children and adults get whooping cough too, and although they tend to have a milder illness, are an important source of infection for infants.

Whooping cough takes one to two weeks to develop and starts with symptoms of a runny nose and dry cough. The coughing increases in frequency and duration over the next few weeks, developing into prolonged coughing bouts. The 'whoop' sound occurs as the person draws a breath in after a long coughing attack. Not everyone develops this symptom. Older children and adults may not make the whooping sound – they may just have a cough. Children and some adults may go red in the face and vomit after coughing bouts.

What can be done to prevent whooping cough?

Immunisation, given as the DTaP-IPV injection in the first few months of life, offers the best protection against whooping cough. Newborn babies do not get significant protection from their mothers, and should receive DTaP-IPV injections at the recommended times: at six weeks, three months, five months and four years of age, as recommended in 'Immunising Your Children' (a pamphlet available from your doctor). There is a further booster dose recommended at eleven years of age.

Get the record of the whooping cough immunisations entered into your child's Well Child Tamariki Ora book by your doctor or practice nurse. Children can be given catch-up immunisation if this recommended course of immunisation has not been completed. Note that immunisation does not provide life-long immunity: protection is very high in the first few years after immunisation, but declines as children get older. Therefore fully immunised older children and adults can get whooping cough, once their immunity has declined over time. The booster dose at eleven years of age was introduced from February 2006 for this reason, to help protect adolescents and young adults against whooping cough.

What you should do

Early diagnosis

Seek advice from your doctor or nurse if your child or others in your family develop persistent fits of coughing, as this could mean whooping cough. In the early stages of whooping cough infection a special nasal swab may help in the diagnosis.

Treatment of whooping cough

If a person in your family is found to have whooping cough, a 14-day course of the antibiotic erythromycin may be prescribed to prevent spread of infection to other people. If there is a baby, or person with chronic illness in the family, your doctor may also advise a 7-day course of the antibiotic for everyone in the family, in an attempt to prevent the vulnerable person from being infected by other family members.

Should children and adults with whooping cough avoid contact with others?

Yes. Children with whooping cough should stay away from pre-school, school or community gatherings until three weeks have passed since the start of the bad coughing attacks or until they have taken five days of a 14-day course of erythromycin antibiotics, whichever occurs first. After this time they may still continue to cough, but will no longer be infectious to others.

Adults with whooping cough should stay away from work or community gatherings until three weeks have passed since the start of the bad coughing attacks or until they have taken five days of a 14-day course of erythromycin antibiotics, whichever occurs first. After this time they may still continue to cough, but will no longer be infectious to others.

For further information, ring Auckland Regional Public Health Service on 623 4600 and ask to speak with someone who can give you information about whooping cough.

Yours sincerely

Public Health Medicine Specialist/AMT Officer
Auckland Regional Public Health Service