



Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

Information for Early Childhood Education Services

Whooping cough is a highly infectious disease, caused by bacteria and spread through coughing and sneezing. It is a serious childhood illness especially for babies and infants.

You can help us to contain the spread of whooping cough in the following ways:

Ensure that your Immunisation Register is up to date

This is a legal requirement and helps Early Childhood Education (ECE) staff to identify children in the event of an outbreak at the centre. It will also help ECE staff to be aware of children who are more susceptible to getting whooping cough (unimmunised children and children who have not had all of their immunisations).

Be alert to children displaying symptoms

Whooping cough starts with a runny nose, fever and dry cough. After around one week the coughing usually gets worse and children can have coughing fits that end with a 'whoop' or vomiting. Young babies can be very sick with whooping cough, have trouble feeding and breathing and often need to be hospitalised.

If you think a child at your ECE centre may have whooping cough, please advise the parents to have their child seen by a GP immediately. The test for whooping cough is carried out easily with a special nose swab.

If a child or staff member is diagnosed with whooping cough by their GP they need to stay at home until they have completed five days of antibiotics or, if they do not take antibiotics, three weeks have passed since their bad cough started. After either of these, they will no longer be infectious even if they still have a cough.

What your centre can do to help stop whooping cough

- **Tell parents or carers about whooping cough** - please make available the whooping cough information sheet provided to all parents at your ECE centre.
- **Promote coughing etiquette** – use tissues to cover coughs and sneezes and throw tissue away afterwards.
- **Staff immunisation** – the Ministry of Health recommends adult immunisation for all staff at ECE centres. This is a booster dose given every 10 years. Staff can get vaccinated at their GPs however there will be a cost.
- **Hand washing** – encourage frequent hand washing with soap and water for 20 seconds. Ensure hands are thoroughly dried afterwards.

Should you need further advice call the Immunisation Advisory Centre on 0800 IMMUNE (466 863) or visit the Toi Te Ora – Public Health Service website: www.ttophs.govt.nz/whooping_cough