

Immunise against whooping cough

Protect baby and you



immunise

their best protection

What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a serious disease caused by bacteria that are easily spread by coughing and sneezing.

How serious is it?

Whooping cough can be very upsetting for you and your baby. It can cause severe coughing attacks and may lead to serious complications, like pneumonia and brain damage.

It starts just like a common cold – runny nose, sneezing, slight fever and a mild irritating cough. The coughing attacks get worse and can be followed by a gasping breath in or a ‘whoop’, and sometimes vomiting. The cough can last for up to 3 months.

Whooping cough is worse for babies under 1-year-old. They are often unable to feed or breathe properly so become very ill and may end up in hospital. In some cases, they can die.




800+

75%


2 died

Fact: Over 800 babies caught whooping cough in the 2010–2013 outbreak in NZ. Of these, 75% needed hospital treatment. Two babies and one 3-year-old died.¹

How can I protect my baby?

Immunisation is the best way to protect your baby against whooping cough.

Immunisation during pregnancy

Getting immunised between 28 and 38 weeks of pregnancy means you can pass on your immunity to your baby when they're most vulnerable. It helps to protect baby until their first immunisations.

The whooping cough vaccine is safe for use in pregnancy. The vaccine itself doesn't get passed on to your baby, but the mother's immunity to whooping cough does.

Influenza immunisation is also recommended during pregnancy. The vaccine is free for pregnant women during the seasonal influenza programme.



Immunise on time

After your baby is born, immunise them on time – at 6 weeks, 3 months and 5 months. Your baby needs to have 3 doses of the vaccine to be protected against whooping cough, even if you were immunised during pregnancy.

Delaying immunisation puts your baby at higher risk of catching avoidable diseases when they're most vulnerable to severe illness

Whooping cough boosters at 4 and 11-years-old help to keep your child protected and stop the disease from being passed on to younger children and babies.

Other ways to protect your baby

The Ministry of Health recommends that other adults in close contact with babies are immunised against whooping cough. However, this is not free.

Keep babies away from anyone with a cough, even if they and baby are fully immunised

Enrolling your baby at a general practice as soon as they're born is a good way to make sure they get the care they need on time.

How effective is the vaccine?

Over 80% of babies are protected once they've completed 3 doses of the vaccine (at 6 weeks, 3 months and 5 months).²

Immunising against whooping cough during pregnancy protects about 90% of babies in their first few weeks of life.³

Protection wears off over time. People can get whooping cough some years later, even if they've been immunised or have had it before.



1 Institute of Environmental Science and Research Ltd (ESR).

2 Greco D, Salmaso S, Mastrantonio , et al. 1996. A controlled trial of two acellular vaccines and one whole-cell vaccine against pertussis. *New England Journal of Medicine* 334(6):341-8.

3 Amirthalingam G, Andrews N, Campbell H, et al. 2014. Effectiveness of maternal pertussis vaccination in England: an observational study. *The Lancet* 384:1521-28.

Protect your baby

- 1. Enrol with a midwife and general practice** – as soon as you know you're pregnant
- 2. Get immunised during pregnancy** – against whooping cough and influenza
- 3. Immunise baby on time** – at 6 weeks, 3 months and 5 months

For more information about immunisation, talk to your midwife, nurse or doctor.

Or:

- call 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863) for free expert advice about immunisation
- visit: www.immunise.govt.nz or www.immune.org.nz

This resource is available from healthed.govt.nz or the Authorised Provider at your DHB. Feb 2016. **HE2503**



New Zealand Government

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