

PERTUSSIS (WHOOPING COUGH) ALERT

Information for NSW General Practitioners & Aboriginal Medical Services

Please distribute this information to all staff

1. Cases of pertussis are increasing across NSW, particularly among school aged children
2. Patients with symptoms consistent with pertussis should be tested, and restricted from attending school, childcare, or work until pertussis is excluded or 5 days of appropriate antibiotic therapy have been completed
3. Testing of asymptomatic contacts is not recommended

Summary

Pertussis epidemics commonly occur every three to four years, and it is anticipated that cases will continue to increase into 2019. Identification, isolation, and appropriate treatment of symptomatic cases and contacts can help to prevent spread.

Suspect & Test

- Suspect pertussis in patients presenting with a cough, regardless of vaccination status.
- Nasopharyngeal swab or aspirate for bacterial PCR is the preferred diagnostic method.
- Testing of asymptomatic contacts of pertussis cases is NOT recommended.

Isolate and treat

- Patients presenting with symptoms consistent with pertussis should not return to child care, school, or work, and should avoid contact with babies less than 6 months old and women in their last month of pregnancy until:
 - Pertussis has been excluded **OR**
 - They have completed 5 days of appropriate antimicrobial therapy
- Appropriate antibiotics (azithromycin, clarithromycin or trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole) reduce the period of infectiousness and should be commenced as soon as possible. See Therapeutic Guidelines: <http://www.tg.org.au/>
- Pregnant women and babies less than 6 months of age identified as contacts of confirmed pertussis cases may require prophylactic antibiotics.

Vaccinate

- Ensure infants are vaccinated on time, and **every pregnant woman** is vaccinated in the third trimester, preferably at 28 weeks.
- Boosters are recommended every 10 years for:
 - People who work with children and pregnant women (e.g. childcare workers, other health care workers)
 - Family members of infants and pregnant women (including grandparents)

Further Information:

Contact your local public health unit on **1300 066 055** or visit the NSW pertussis website: www.health.nsw.gov.au/protectnewborns



Dr Vicky Sheppard
Director, Communicable Diseases Branch
29 November 2018