

3 September 2024

Pertussis update for health professionals in Taranaki

This is to advise healthcare providers and professionals in Taranaki to be alert for patients presenting with possible symptoms of pertussis/whooping cough, and to promote the uptake of prenatal and scheduled childhood immunisations.

National Public Health Service - Taranaki has been notified of six confirmed cases of pertussis across the district over the last two weeks.

Pertussis is a potentially serious infection, particularly in very young children.

Vaccination:

- Continue to promote immunisation and especially on time immunisation for all babies at 6 weeks, 3 months and 5 months.
- Advise pregnant people of the local increase in pertussis and recommend the free Boostrix vaccination from 16 weeks in every pregnancy.
- Pertussis vaccination should be encouraged for the extended whānau of pregnant people, new babies and infants, although depending on their age they may not be eligible for a funded vaccine.
- Encourage all staff, including reception and administrative staff, to be protected from pertussis as well as influenza and measles. Booster vaccinations are recommended for all lead maternity carers and healthcare workers who are in daily contact with infants.

Testing, treatment and isolation

- Pertussis PCR (nasopharyngeal swab) is the recommended test for people presenting with whooping cough characteristic symptoms.
- Testing after 4 weeks from onset of symptoms and after 3 weeks of cough is not useful.
- Probable and confirmed cases need to isolate at home for five days since starting antibiotic treatment or two days if treated with azithromycin.
- If paroxysmal coughing has been present for three or more weeks, treatment is not usually recommended, and isolation is not necessary.
- See Health Pathways for treatment recommendations.

High-risk groups include:

- Infants younger than 1 year and also children <5 years who are unimmunised or partially immunised.
- Pregnant people.

- People at risk of severe disease, e.g. chronic respiratory disease, congenital heart disease, immunocompromise.
- People who work or spend extended time with vulnerable people outside the household, e.g. early childhood centre, aged residential care.

Treatment of symptomatic or high priority contacts:

- Guidance is available on Health Pathways.
- Guidance is also available in the Communicable Diseases Manual – see here: [Pertussis – Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora](#)

Please remember to notify suspected cases of pertussis to your local Public Health Service. Please contact the on-call Health Protection Officer (email health.protection@tdhb.org.nz or 0272426271).

Ngā mihi



Dr Neil de Wet

Medical Officer of Health for Taranaki