
To:	General Practitioners, Hospital Specialists, Pharmacists, After-Hours Centres and Emergency Departments in Capital, Coast, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa
From:	Dr Craig Thornley, Medical Officer of Health National Public Health Service – Central Region
Date:	12/06/2024
Title:	Update: Pertussis (whooping cough) case numbers continue to increase

Please distribute the following information to relevant staff in your organisation

All public health alerts are available at www.rph.org.nz (health professionals – public health alerts)

Pertussis (whooping cough) case numbers increasing

Pertussis case numbers in the greater Wellington region are continuing to increase, with a total of 43 confirmed or probable cases notified since the start of 2024. Wairarapa accounts for the majority of cases in the region, and the weekly total of cases notified in Wairarapa has progressively increased since mid-May.

Guidance on investigation and management of pertussis is available on 3D Health Pathways at the following [link](#). Please note the following key points:

Treatment and isolation

1. If the patient is not being admitted to hospital, prescribe antibiotic treatment on suspicion of pertussis **without waiting for test results**.
2. Suspect cases need to **isolate at home** pending test results
3. Probable and confirmed cases need to isolate at home for **five days** from start of antibiotic treatment: this can be shortened to **two days if treated with azithromycin**
4. Treatment is not usually recommended if paroxysmal coughing is present for three or more weeks.
5. Antibiotic guidance is available on Health Pathways.

Management of contacts at high risk of severe illness or transmission

6. Antibiotic treatment of contacts is the same as for case treatment. Guidance on treating contacts is available on Health Pathways.

Immunisation

7. Advise pregnant people of the local increase in Pertussis and recommend the free Boostrix vaccination from 16 weeks in every pregnancy
8. 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.

9. Health NZ and Hauora provider Whaiora are providing **free drop-in immunisation and wellness clinics** in the Wairarapa for pregnant people and those aged 0-18 years. See <https://www.rph.org.nz/news-and-events/events/> for details. The clinics are being advertised widely.
10. Encourage all **staff, including reception and administrative staff**, to be protected from pertussis as well as influenza and measles. Booster vaccinations are recommended 10-yearly for all lead maternity carers and healthcare workers who are in daily contact with infants
11. **Prioritise on-time immunisation** for all babies at 6w, 3m and 5m and boosters at 4y and 11y.

Notify suspected cases of pertussis using the form [here](#) or phone the notifications line on (04) 570 9267.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Additional information is available by visiting <https://www.rph.org.nz/public-health-topics/illness-and-disease/whooping-cough-pertussis/>
- Factsheets on whooping cough are available [here](#)
- Ministry of Health www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/whooping-cough
- IMAC: www.immune.org.nz/diseases/pertussis
- KidsHealth: www.kidshealth.org.nz/whooping-cough