

Information for people with whooping cough (pertussis)

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a very infectious disease that is spread by coughing and sneezing. It can be dangerous for babies and children, especially those under one year of age.

If you have whooping cough you need to stay home and isolate to reduce the risk of passing on the disease. Use the information in this factsheet to keep yourself and others safe.

1

STAYING HOME IN ISOLATION

You need to stay home and avoid seeing other people until you no longer risk passing whooping cough on to others.

Staying home also means staying away from anywhere you could risk passing on the disease to others, such as day care, school or work.

You can finish isolating and return to your normal activities either:

- five days after you start taking antibiotics (or two days if the antibiotic is azithromycin)
- three weeks after your cough begun, if you don't take antibiotics

Your doctor will tell you when you can leave your home and return to normal life.

2

PROTECTING OTHERS

In addition to staying home, you can also reduce the risk of passing on the disease by:

- Staying away from others you live with, if possible
- Wearing a face mask when around other people or indoors
- Coughing into your elbow and sneezing into a tissue
- Regularly washing or sanitising your hands

It's very important while you are isolating you avoid seeing babies, young children, pregnant women, anyone with a chronic illness and people aged over 65. These groups can become very sick from whooping cough if they catch it.

3

GETTING EMERGENCY HELP

Call 111 if your baby or child is turning blue in the lips, mouth or face when coughing, or has stopped breathing (even for a small amount of time).

Call 111 for an adult if they have difficulty breathing.

4

MEDICINE FOR WHOOPING COUGH

You will be given a course of antibiotics by your doctor. Taking these will reduce the amount of time you are infectious (which means at risk of passing on whooping cough), and reduce the chance of you getting repeat infections.

Unfortunately the antibiotics will not cure the cough, and you may still have this for several weeks.

If there are people in your whānau at higher risk of becoming very unwell from whooping cough then others you live with may be given antibiotics too.

5

TELLING OTHERS

Anyone you've seen for one hour or more from when your cough started, or in the week beforehand, may have caught whooping cough from you. You will need to tell them they are at risk.

This may include your whānau, your employer, or other people you've seen recently. If your child has caught whooping cough you should tell their school or early learning service.

Pass on these messages:

- They may have caught whooping cough from you.
- They should pay close attention to their health, and watch out for a cough, fever or runny nose.
- If they feel unwell they should call their doctor, or ring Healthline for free anytime on 0800 611 116.
- If they or their child have trouble breathing they should call 111 immediately.
- Even if they don't have symptoms, they should speak to their doctor about getting antibiotics if they:
 - are pregnant;
 - have babies or young children;
 - are over 65 or over 45 and not fully immunised;
 - have a chronic illness or weak immune system; or
 - work with or care for any of these groups.

6

YOUR RECOVERY

Most people with whooping cough recover safely from home.

You can ease your recovery by:

- getting plenty of rest
- sipping warm drinks
- reducing dry air in your home, by using a humidifier in the bedroom
- using saline nose drops to help remove thick mucus
- drinking lots of clear fluids
- avoiding coughing triggers, such as cigarette smoke, perfumes or pollutants

There is no medication that can stop the cough once it starts, and cough medicine will not be effective. If the cough is painful you can use paracetamol for pain relief. It may last for several weeks or months.

If you need medical advice call your doctor, or ring Healthline for free anytime on 0800 611 116.

After you've recovered it's recommended you and others in your whānau get the whooping cough vaccine. You can speak to your doctor about this.



For more information visit:
info.health.nz/whooping-cough