Regional Public Health
Better Health For The Greater Wellington Region

6th March 2017

To: Staff, Parents and Caregivers of Students at Titahi Bay Primary School

PERTUSSIS (WHOOPING COUGH)

A person who regularly attends Titahi Bay Primary School has been diagnosed with confirmed Whooping Cough. They would have been infectious from approximately 10th February 2017. The incubation period is between 6 and 20 days, average is 14 days. Whooping cough may start with a runny nose which then proceeds to coughing. If you have the disease you are infectious from the time of the runny nose until 3 weeks after the cough starts. If treated with either a 14 day course of Erythromycin or 5 day course of Azithromycin, you are no longer infectious after you have completed 5 days of the antibiotic treatment.

Regional Public Health has had several notifications recently of confirmed cases of Whooping Cough (Pertussis) in adults and children. The bacteria are circulating in the community, which potentially can put young babies and small children at risk of this highly infectious disease. **In children under one year of age this can be very serious. Women in the last 4 weeks of pregnancy are advised to see their GP or Lead Maternity Career.**

For staff / Children we recommend the following actions:

- Anyone with a persistent cough should see their doctor, and remain away from work until the doctor is sure it is not whooping cough.
- All children should be up-to-date with their Pertussis (Whooping Cough) immunisations and are advised to check with their family doctor. Pertussis immunisation is given at six weeks, three months, five months and a booster at 4 and 11 years of age.
- Boostrix vaccine is also recommended and free for pregnant women between (28-38) weeks of pregnancy to reduce their risk of getting the disease and passing it onto their new born baby. The vaccine provides protection pre and post delivery to mother and up to six weeks post delivery for baby.
- Boostrix Vaccine is recommended but not funded for; early child care workers, health professionals that care for young children or work in high risk areas and families of new born babies.

The following people who are at high risk of severe disease are recommended to discuss with their GP, a 5 day course of the antibiotic azithromycin. Antibiotics are not 100% at preventing whooping cough but will reduce the risk.

- Children under 1 year of age
- People that are immunocompromised from e.g. cancer treatment, high dose steroids.
- Pregnant women, especially in the last trimester.
- Any one who lives with an infant under 12 months of age

Whooping cough is usually characterised by a cough lasting longer than two weeks with spasms of coughing ending in vomiting or difficulty breathing. This is often accompanied by a whooping sound. However don't wait until someone has had the cough for more than two weeks before checking it out. Remember that adults can also get whooping cough but usually do not have the classical whooping and vomiting after bouts of coughing.

If you have any queries please contact your family doctor or practice nurse, or phone the Communicable Disease Team (Public Health Nurse or Medical Officer) on (04) 570 9002.

Yours sincerely

Tracey Green
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For Medical Officer of Health
Disease Prevention

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Whooping Cough *(Pertussis)*

What is it?

Whooping cough is a bacterial infection, which affects the respiratory system. It is also known as the '100 day cough' because of the long course of the illness.

What are the symptoms?

Whooping cough usually starts with a runny nose and irritating cough lasting 1-2 weeks. This then develops into fits of coughing, which may end with vomiting, or with a 'whooping' sound. Complications can include pneumonia, ear infections, and symptoms related to the effects of coughing. It can be particularly serious in children under one year of age who are more at risk of serious complications including in very severe cases brain damage and death.

Can adults get whooping cough?

Adults and older children can also get whooping cough. Sometimes they do not get the classical symptoms of cough with whoop, but instead a persistent cough which can be worse at night.

How does it spread?

Whooping cough spreads when someone with the illness coughs or sneezes, spraying droplets of fluid from the nose or throat.

How long is it infectious?

A person is most infectious in the early stage of runny nose and irritating cough. Without treatment they continue to be infectious until three weeks after the start of the fits of coughing. Antibiotic treatment shortens the contagious period. An infected person is no longer contagious from five days after the start of antibiotic treatment.

Vaccination

Regional Public Health advises all parents to ensure that their children are fully immunised against this disease. The immunisation is normally given at six weeks, three months, five months and a booster at 4 and 11 years of age.

Immunisation is free to all children and pregnant women to prevent whooping cough (Boostrix).

- The vaccine is recommended and free for pregnant women between 28-38 weeks of pregnancy. The vaccine provides protection to the mother, and some protection to the baby.
- Boostrix vaccine is recommended but not funded for: Early Child Care workers, health professionals that work with young children or work in high risk areas and families of newborn babies.

Can fully vaccinated children get whooping cough?

Yes, when there is a high level of infection in the community even fully vaccinated children can get whooping cough as the vaccines are effective in preventing illness in more than 80% of people.

Vaccinated children may get a milder infection. To stop whooping cough circulating in the community we need a very high level of vaccination.

If you would like any more information regarding whooping cough, please contact Healthline on 0800 611 116.

The Regional Public Health Disease Control Team are available between 8am–4.30pm on (04) 570 9002.

You can also visit these websites:

www.moh.govt.nz
www.imac.auckland.ac.nz

www.rph.org.nz

For further information contact Regional Public Health
Private Bag 31907, Lower Hutt 5040, Phone 04 570 9002