

23.05.25

Important information about whooping cough (pertussis)

Tēnā koe,

You have been sent this letter because your child may have been near someone with whooping cough (pertussis) at Rai Valley School. We understand this is likely to be a stressful time for you and your whānau. As your local public health service, we are here to offer our support to you during this time.

Please watch for the symptoms of whooping cough explained below, even if you are fully immunised as you may still develop whooping cough and pass it on to others. Whooping cough spreads very easily by coughing and sneezing and can cause serious harm to some members of our whānau and communities.

If you are at high risk of serious illness from whooping cough, or are in close contact (i.e. live, work, or routinely interact) with someone who is, then you should seek advice from your GP, doctor or hauora/healthcare provider as soon as possible for them to consider whether to prescribe you antibiotics.

Those at high risk of serious illness from whooping cough are:

- pēpi (babies) who are under 12 months old who have received fewer than 3 doses of a pertussis-containing vaccine (included as part of routine immunisations at 6 weeks, 3 months and 5 months), especially those aged under 6 months and/or Māori and Pacific pēpi
- pregnant people in their last trimester of pregnancy, from 28 weeks
- individuals who have long term lung conditions and/or are immunocompromised (have a weak immune system).

You only need antibiotics if you are, or someone you are in close contact with is, in any of these high-risk groups, or you are diagnosed with whooping cough.

Please watch for whooping cough symptoms, including:

- **a runny nose**
- **fever**
- **in particular, a cough** that is often worse at night and gets worse over time, turning into long coughing bouts that may end in gagging or vomiting.

Most people who get sick begin to feel unwell 7 to 10 days after exposure to the illness but sometimes this could take up to 21 days to develop. **If you have any of these symptoms or a cough lasting more than two weeks:**

- **call Healthline** for free health advice anytime 24/7 on 0800 611 116. They may advise you to see your healthcare provider for further assessment and antibiotic treatment
- **stay home from work** while unwell
- **keep away from people at high risk of serious illness** while unwell.

Immunisation is the best way to protect you and you whānau against whooping cough.

Advice on immunisation, including how to check your immunisation status and how to get immunised is detailed in the *Information Sheet* provided.

For general information on whooping cough and where to get advice if you need it (including interpreter and NZ Relay support services), please see the *Information Sheet* provided or visit the Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora website at info.health.nz/WhoopingCough.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for helping to stop the spread of whooping cough in your community, and for keeping others safe by following this important public health advice.

Ngā mihi nui/Yours sincerely

Rebekah Blease

Communicable Diseases Nurse
Health NZ | Te Whatu Ora
National Public Health Service – Nelson Marlborough PHS

Encl: Whooping cough Information Sheet

CC: GP