

Protect your baby from Whooping Cough

Do antibodies from the mother protect the baby against whooping cough?

Maternal antibodies against whooping cough are transferred to your baby at birth and during breast feeding but they don't give adequate long term protection.

What is the adult whooping cough vaccine?

The adult whooping cough vaccine is a combination vaccine that provides protection against whooping cough, diphtheria and tetanus. It is safe to use in the post natal period and while breast feeding.

Are there any side effects of the vaccine?

Following administration the vaccine can cause tenderness, redness and swelling at the injection site for one to two days. Very rarely there is headache, tiredness, muscle pains and fever. Relief can be achieved by putting a cold wet cloth on the site and giving paracetamol. Severe allergic reactions are very rare. People who have had an allergic reaction to a previous vaccine containing tetanus, diphtheria or whooping cough should talk to their doctor.

How long will protection last?

Current data shows an adult whooping cough vaccine will last up to 10 years.

How can whooping cough be treated and controlled?

Whooping cough can be treated with antibiotics. Treatment can prevent the infection from being passed on but may not alter the course of infection for the individual. See your doctor if you have symptoms of whooping cough.

The best protection for babies under 6 months of age against whooping cough is for you and any adults who care for your baby to get a booster vaccination for whooping cough.

For further information please contact your doctor, 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or visit the Queensland Health website: www.health.qld.gov.au



Contact Details for Population Health Units

Southern Area	Central Area	Northern Area
Brisbane South 3000 9148	Brisbane North 3624 1111	Cairns 4050 3600
Gold Coast 5509 7222	Sunshine Coast 5409 6600	Townsville 4753 9000
Darling Downs 4631 9888	Rockhampton 4920 6989	Mackay 4968 6611
	Hervey Bay 4120 6000	Mt Isa 4744 4846
	Moreton Bay 3142 1800	

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Queensland Government
Queensland Health

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What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a highly contagious disease that is spread by coughing, sneezing and direct contact with infected nose or mouth secretions such as sharing food or kissing.

What is the infectious period?

A person is infectious during the cold like symptoms in the early stages through to 5 days after starting antibiotics, or if left untreated for the first 3 weeks of coughing.

What are the symptoms of whooping cough?

Whooping cough starts with cold-like symptoms and an irritating cough. The irritating cough can develop into episodes of coughing bouts often followed by dry retching or vomiting.

In children, the cough may end with a crowing noise (the whoop) as air is drawn back into the chest. Adults and older children may have mild disease but are still able to pass the infection to others including babies.

Who is most at risk?

Whooping cough is most serious in babies who are under 6 months of age as they are not fully protected by vaccination. Most babies with whooping cough will have caught it from a parent or grandparent.



Babies may hold their breath and sometimes turn blue from lack of oxygen. Complications of pertussis in babies include pneumonia, fits and brain damage from prolonged lack of oxygen. Most hospitalisations and deaths occur in those under 6 months of age.

How can whooping cough be prevented?

Immunisation is the best way to prevent whooping cough. A combination vaccine containing whooping cough is given at 2, 4 and 6 months of age; a booster dose at 4 years of age; and to students in year 10 at school. It is very important that vaccinations are given when they are due so you need to make sure that your baby is vaccinated on time.

Protection against whooping cough from vaccination or disease in childhood is not life long and wanes with time. A booster vaccine in adults is needed to maintain protection.

A booster should be given to:

- adults planning a pregnancy
- all new parents as soon as possible after the birth of their baby
- adults working with or caring for young children ie child care workers, health care workers, grandparents
- any adult who wishes to protect themselves