

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

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Regional Public Health

HAUORA Ā IWI KI TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI
Better health for the greater Wellington region

To:	General Practitioners, Hospital Specialists, Pharmacists, Lead Maternity Carers, After-Hours Centres and Emergency Departments in the greater Wellington and Wairarapa regions
From:	Dr Annette Nesdale
Date:	2 February 2018
Title:	Public Health Alert: Whooping cough

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)

Whooping cough update on treatment and local cases

- Fifty five cases of whooping cough have been diagnosed in in the greater Wellington region since 1st January this year. This is twice as many as the average monthly number of cases notified in 2017.
- There have been 21 cases in the Wellington region, 19 in the Hutt Valley and 15 in the Wairarapa.
- The age range is from babies < 6 months to adults in their 70's. There were three babies under 1 year of age; this is age group at highest risk of severe disease and complications.

Diagnosis

- A throat or nasopharyngeal swab for PCR is recommended for diagnosis.
- If the person has been coughing for more than four weeks the sensitivity of laboratory diagnosis drops and is testing is not recommended unless needed for clinical management.
- Laboratory confirmation is not required for people living in the same house or had other close contact with a confirmed case; these people still need to be notified to Public Health as a 'probable case'.

Treatment

- Azithromycin is recommended and funded for the treatment and prophylaxis for adults, children and infants.
- Azithromycin is the preferred macrolide during pregnancy and lactation and in infants <1 month of age due to lower risk of hypertrophic pyloric stenosis in infants. Parents

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should still be informed of the signs and symptoms pyloric stenosis and to seek medical advice if concerned.

- The schedule for azithromycin is as follows:
 - Infants and children: Day one: 10mg /kg/day in a single dose (max 500 mg); Days two to five: 5mg/kg/day in single daily dose (max 250mg per day).
 - Adults: Day one: 500mg as a single dose; Days two to five: 250 mg once daily.
- Alternate antibiotic regimes are outlined on page 392 of the Immunisation Handbook 2017.
- Antibiotics are of limited value if started three or more weeks after the onset of cough, but should be considered for pregnant women with pertussis in the third trimester even if it is six to eight weeks since cough onset or if the case has high risk contacts e.g. very young infants, pregnant women.

Exclusion

NEW people who receive Azithromycin are considered non-infectious after two days of treatment and can return to their usual activities outside the home. The five day exclusion from school, work and early child care centres remains when other antibiotics are used for treatment.

Further information

A factsheet on whooping cough is available below.

<http://www.rph.org.nz/public-health-topics/illness-and-disease/whooping-cough-pertussis/whooping-cough-fact-sheet.pdf>

The 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