



To:	General Practices, Pharmacists, After-Hours Centres and Emergency Departments in the greater Wellington and Wairarapa regions
From:	Dr Annette Nesdale, Medical Officer of Health
Date:	7 August 2015
Title:	Pertussis outbreak and the importance of timely pertussis immunisation

Please distribute the following information to relevant staff in your organisation.

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Pertussis outbreak in Hawea/Wanaka

The Ministry of Health have provided the following information about the pertussis outbreak in Wanaka/Hawea and the importance of pertussis immunisation. Immunisation is especially important for people who may be traveling to this area over the coming weeks.

ADVISORY SUMMARY:

Pertussis (whooping cough) occurs throughout the year in New Zealand with epidemic cycles, driven by waning immunity following both vaccination and natural infection, occurring about every two to five years. The last epidemic cycle began in August 2011 with pertussis cases returning to near pre-epidemic levels in mid-2014.

Currently there is an outbreak of pertussis in the Hawea/Wanaka area. Between 27 July and 6 August there have been 14 confirmed and 2 probable cases with further cases under investigation. The local public health unit is responding to this outbreak and has provided information on immunisation and public health measures to local schools, midwives, general practitioners and practice nurses in the region.

The outbreak in the Hawea/Wanaka area is a reminder of the importance of timely immunisation against pertussis during pregnancy and in infants. Transmission of pertussis from mother to baby is a significant risk factor for pertussis in infants. Because vaccination during pregnancy can reduce

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He ture no nga korero katoa kei roto o tenei karere, no reira, kia tupato. Mehemea kaore matau kua e mau. Me whakamohiotia atu ki to Tari, me te mea nana I tonu mai. E Tika Hoki.



this risk, a funded pertussis booster was introduced for pregnant women as an epidemic control measure in 2013.

Given the effectiveness of pertussis vaccination in pregnancy and the level of pertussis transmission that continues between epidemic cycles, from 1 August 2015, **the funded pertussis booster** is now available and should be given to **every pregnant woman, between 28 and 38 weeks** gestation, regardless of the pertussis rates in the country. This vaccine should be given during **every pregnancy**.

The National Immunisation Schedule includes pertussis immunisations at 6 weeks, 3 and 5 months of age, with booster doses at 4 and 11 years. It is **crucial that the primary series**, in particular, is **given on-time**.

Other adults can receive **unfunded pertussis booster** vaccinations. In particular, pertussis booster is recommended for household contacts of newborns, even if the baby has been fully immunised, and for **people who work with, live with or care for infants** under 12 months of age (with a booster dose at 10-year interval in this case).

Boosters should also be considered for **other people** who are vulnerable to whooping cough and at **high risk of severe illness or complications** (e.g., those with chronic respiratory conditions, congenital heart disease or immunodeficiency).

Further information and resources on pertussis can be found on the Ministry website

<http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/whooping-cough>