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<b>To:</b>	General Practitioners, Hospital Specialists, Lead Maternity Care Givers, Pharmacists, After-Hours Centres and Emergency Departments in the Wellington, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa districts
<b>From:</b>	Dr Annette Nesdale
<b>Date:</b>	21 November 2024
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Pertussis update in Greater Wellington and Wairarapa</b>

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

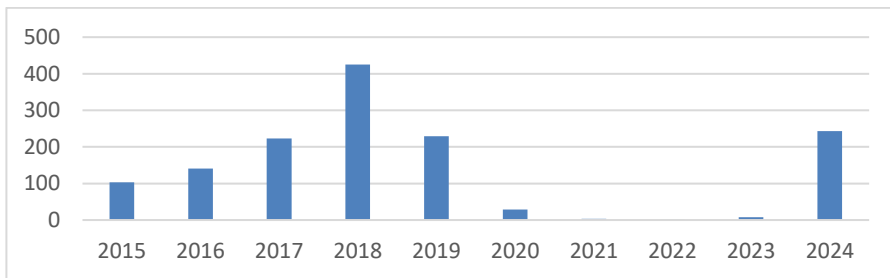
All public health alerts are available at [www.rph.org.nz](http://www.rph.org.nz) (health professionals – public health alerts)

## **Pertussis (Whooping cough) update**

### **Whooping cough**

There is a sustained increase in pertussis notifications across the Greater Wellington region (GWR). After 4 years of low pertussis activity notification rates are similar to pre-COVID rates.

#### **Pertussis notifications in the GRW from 1/1/2015 to 14/11/2024**



Pertussis can be very severe, particularly for young babies. There have been 20 hospitalisations in the GRW so far this year; 9 of which were infants aged < 1 year, their ethnicities are Māori (4), Pacifica (3) and European (2).

### **Immunisation**

The most important actions to protect young babies and the wider community are:

- Proactively promote the FREE Boostrix immunisation from 16 weeks in every pregnancy. It is estimated that less than half of pregnant people are receiving this vaccine which is 92% protective against infant death from pertussis.
- Prioritise on time vaccinations at 6w, 3m 5 months and the 4-year-old booster.
- Booster vaccinations for all lead maternity carers and healthcare workers who are in daily contact with infants.

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## Testing, treatment and isolation

- Pertussis PCR is the recommended test. Testing after 4 weeks of cough is not useful.
  - Use UTM/VTM swab. Swab guide can be found [here](#).
- Probable and confirmed cases need to **isolate** at home for five days since starting antibiotic treatment or two days if treated with azithromycin.
- Treatment is not usually recommended if paroxysmal coughing is present for three or more weeks.
- Antibiotic guidance is available on Health Pathways [here](#).
- The antibiotic treatment for **symptomatic or high priority contacts** are the same as for case treatment.

## Notification

With the increase in notifications Public Health staff will focus on high-priority cases and contacts and settings where the risk of transmission and severe disease is higher e.g. healthcare, particularly services for pregnant people, and young babies, schools and early learning services. Low risk cases will receive information and advice by email that they can share with their workplace, and friends who they interacted with when they were infectious.

### High priority cases and contacts:

- children under 12 months old
- children and adults who live with, or spend much of their time around a child under 12 months old, including health care and education settings
- pregnant women (particularly in the last month of pregnancy)
- individuals that are at high risk of severe illness or complications because a pre-existing health condition that may be exacerbated by a pertussis infection (for example those with chronic respiratory conditions, congenital heart disease or immunodeficiency).

**Notify all suspected and confirmed cases of pertussis using the form [here](#).** Completing **all sections** of the notification form will enable timely public health follow up.

### National awareness campaign

This week a national pertussis awareness campaign was rolled out and includes radio advertising, social media and pitched media stories. The focus is on parents, caregivers and whānau of children aged 0 to 5 years, pregnant people/hapūtanga, anyone that might come into contact with a newborn (particularly those 0 to 6 weeks of age before their first Pertussis vaccine), and older adults.

## Further information

- Additional information is available by visiting our website [here](#)
- Factsheets on whooping cough are available [here](#)
- The Ministry of Health [www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/whooping-cough](http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/whooping-cough) IMAC: [www.immune.org.nz/diseases/pertussis](http://www.immune.org.nz/diseases/pertussis)
- KidsHealth: [www.kidshealth.org.nz/whooping-cough](http://www.kidshealth.org.nz/whooping-cough)