

Thursday, 18 February 2016

Whooping cough (Pertussis) alert

The Gold Coast Public Health Unit has recently been advised of a confirmed case of whooping cough (pertussis) at Worongary State School,

Whooping cough is a highly contagious respiratory infection that can be life threatening for babies and young children. Symptoms can range in severity from quite mild to coughing fits which often end with a gag or a vomit. Whooping cough usually starts with symptoms typical of a head cold with a runny nose, sneezing and tiredness and then the cough develops.

People with whooping cough are infectious for the first three weeks of the illness or until they have received 5 days of the 7 day course of the appropriate antibiotics. If you have any concerns about the symptoms of whooping cough in your child then you should exclude them from childcare and take them to your doctor **as soon as possible**. If the illness is detected early in its course, treatment will speed recovery and reduce the period of infectivity for other people.

The following recommendations are made to reduce the risk of further cases of whooping cough in the community especially to the very young or unimmunised children.

1. Please make sure your family is fully up to date with all their vaccinations. Vaccination against whooping cough is included in vaccinations given at 2, 4 and 6 months and again at 4 years. A funded booster dose is provided for Year 10 students through the School Based Vaccination program.
2. Pregnant women in their third trimester of pregnancy are eligible for a funded booster vaccine for every pregnancy to protect newborn babies against whooping cough. Vaccination gives good protection, but unfortunately this protection does wane with time.
3. For those not eligible for funded vaccine, a once only dose of adult Pertussis Booster vaccine is available at a vaccine cost of approximately \$30-45. The vaccine is recommended for those working with young children such as health care workers, child care workers and teachers and is available on prescription from your GP.
4. All children or staff recently diagnosed with whooping cough are to be excluded from the child care centre or school until they have received either 5 days of a 7 day course of appropriate antibiotics or excluded for 21 days from the onset of coughing.

**For further information please contact
the Gold Coast Public Health Unit on 5687 9000 during business hours
or 13 Health (13 432584) after hours
or your General Practitioner**

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