



Government of **Western Australia**

Department of **Health**

South Metropolitan Health Service

Population Health Unit, Disease Control Section

Dear Parent/Career

PERTUSSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH)

A person who attends Ocean Road Primary School and is in Year 6 (with a sibling in Year 2) has been diagnosed with pertussis (whooping cough). This letter is to alert you that your child may have been exposed to pertussis infection and that you should observe your child for symptoms of pertussis. It is also important to ensure that your child is fully immunised against pertussis.

What is pertussis?

Pertussis is an infection of the throat that can cause bouts of coughing, and sometimes breathing difficulties and vomiting. It can be a very serious infection in small children. The illness can last for many weeks. It usually starts with a snuffle or a cold.

What should you do if you suspect your child has pertussis?

If your child develops symptoms of pertussis, please take your child to your local doctor as soon as possible. Your doctor can arrange for your child to be tested and given antibiotic treatment if necessary which can stop the infection spreading and is more effective if started early. To help prevent this infection spreading, children who are diagnosed with pertussis should not attend school until they have completed the first 5 days of a course of the recommended antibiotics. If antibiotics cannot be taken, they must stay away for 3 weeks after onset of the cough.

How is pertussis prevented?

Vaccination is the most important way to prevent pertussis so it is important to double check that your child is fully up to date with his or her vaccinations. Children are scheduled to receive 3 doses of a pertussis containing vaccine at 2, 4, and 6 months of age, followed by a booster dose at 4 years of age and in year 8 at school. If in doubt, the vaccination status of your child can be obtained by phoning the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) on 1800 653 809 (free call), or your Child Care Centre should have a record of your child's immunisation record.

To reduce the risk of whooping cough in young infants **vaccination is now recommended and is funded by the WA Department of Health for pregnant women during their third trimester (from 28 weeks) of every pregnancy.** Parents, grandparents and carers of babies should also consider being immunised against pertussis. Adults receive a single booster dose. Discuss this with your doctor.

Need more information?

A Pertussis Fact Sheet has been included with this letter. For additional information, visit www.public.health.wa.gov.au. You can also phone the South Metropolitan Population Health Unit in Fremantle during business hours (9431 0200) and ask to speak with the Disease Control nurse, or discuss this further with your doctor, school nurse, or community nurse.

PLEASE TAKE THIS LETTER WITH YOU IF YOU NEED TO VISIT YOUR DOCTOR.

From the Communicable Disease Control Section

South Metropolitan Population Health Unit

Date: 16th May 2017

Kind regards

Narelle Finlay
Deputy Principal