



PERTUSSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH)

Two cases of whooping cough (pertussis) have recently been reported in the York area. Pertussis can affect people of all ages, but it is most serious in infants, especially those under 6 months of age who are too young to be fully vaccinated. The National Immunisation Program provides free pertussis vaccinations for children at the ages of 2, 4, 6 & 18 months, 3 ½ to 4 years, and in Year 8 at school. Pregnant women in their third trimester are also recommended to have the vaccine to protect their unborn child.

Pertussis usually commences with symptoms similar to getting a cold: runny nose, tiredness and sometimes a mild fever. Coughing then develops, often occurring in bouts, and may cause vomiting. The classic 'whoop' or gasp is usually only seen in children. A person is infectious to others until he/she has been coughing for more than 3 weeks, or has been treated with antibiotics for 5 days.

Any person displaying symptoms needs to see their local general practitioner to be tested. As immunity wanes over time, a booster vaccination is recommended every 10 years, especially for health care workers, child care workers and parents/grandparents of young children. Vaccinations for adults are available from local general practitioners.

If you have any concerns or questions, please ring Susie: Wheatbelt Public Health Nurse – on 9622 4320 for more information.

Susie Ridderhof
Public Health Nurse
Wheatbelt Public Health Unit
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