

Free whooping cough vaccine for new parents

Description:

For a limited time parents and grandparents of newborn babies can receive a free booster dose of whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine.

Why protect against whooping cough:

Whooping cough is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by bacteria (germs). The infection is spread by an infected person coughing or sneezing. The most common source of infection in new babies is a sibling or parent.

There is currently an outbreak of whooping cough (pertussis) in many parts of Australia, including Queensland.

Whooping cough (pertussis) can affect people of all ages, however, the infection is most serious in young babies as they are not fully protected by vaccination. In young children it can cause severe health problems, such as coughing, vomiting, pneumonia and seizures, and in some cases it can cause permanent disability and death.

Vaccination is the best way to prevent whooping cough (pertussis). Protection from whooping cough (pertussis) is not life-long and hence adults require a booster dose to maintain protection. To protect babies, all new parents should receive pertussis vaccine as soon as possible after their baby is born. Current data show an adult booster dose of whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine will provide protection for at least 10 years.

Eligibility for free vaccine:

Free whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine is now available for:

- birth parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, grandparents of babies under 6 months of age; and
- other adults in a household with a baby under 6 months of age.

The vaccine is administered as the adolescent/ adult formulation diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine (dTpa). The adult dTpa vaccine is safe to have while breastfeeding. The free program is time-limited.

Eligible people can receive their free vaccine at their regular immunisation provider, however a consultation fee may be charged by your doctor).

Whooping cough (pertussis) vaccination is also recommended, but not free, for anyone who cares for children (such as childcare providers). For those not eligible for free vaccine, the vaccine will have to be purchased from the pharmacy with a prescription from a doctor.

Will people be reimbursed if they have already paid for the vaccine privately? No. Unfortunately people who have already purchased the vaccine privately can not be reimbursed.

Ways to protect your baby from whooping cough:

Important ways to protect babies from whooping cough (pertussis) are:

- Vaccinate babies on time. Babies have the best protection from whooping cough after they have received all three doses of vaccine at two, four and six months of age.
- Keep babies away from anyone with a cough.
- Ensure other children in the household are up-to-date with whooping cough vaccines. Vaccination is recommended for babies at two, four and six months of age, a booster dose at four years of age and a second booster for Year 10 students as part of the School Based Vaccination Program. (The first dose can be given from 6 weeks of age and the booster dose from 3 years and 6 months).
- Make sure parents and anyone who cares for children, such as grandparents and childcare providers, are vaccinated against whooping cough (pertussis).

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Signs and symptoms of whooping cough:

Anyone with symptoms of whooping cough (pertussis) should see their doctor for diagnosis and treatment. Early treatment can help prevent the spread of infection.

Symptoms may include:

- runny nose and sneezing early in the illness;
- an irritable, dry cough that gets worse;
- coughing spasms that can end with a loud gasp (a "whooping sound");
- vomiting after a coughing spasm;
- older children and adults may just have a cough that doesn't go away;

Other Resources :

For further information on whooping cough and recommended vaccinations, please contact:

- your doctor
- your nearest Population Health Unit
- 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84)

Related Content:

[Free whooping cough vaccine for new parents \(checklist\)](#)

[Protect your baby from whooping cough \(brochure\)](#)

[Whooping cough vaccination for new parents \(poster\)](#)

[Whooping cough and immunisation factsheet](#)

[Whooping cough disease factsheet](#)