



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

Dear Parent/Carer

Protecting new born babies from whooping cough

Since mid 2008 Australia has experienced an epidemic of pertussis. Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a highly infectious respiratory infection causing a severe and persistent cough.

Pertussis infection may be mild in adults and older children, but it can be very serious in babies. The bouts of coughing can lead to a lack of oxygen to the brain, causing brain damage and possibly death.

Babies are at greatest risk of disease before they have had three doses of the vaccine. To protect infants early, the first dose can be given as early as six weeks and subsequent doses should be given at four months and then at six months of age.

Parents, grandparents and other close family members can be a source of infection in babies.

In addition to immunising your baby in time, you can increase your baby's protection by:

1. keeping your baby away from people who are sick, especially those with a cough;
2. talking to your general practitioner about your vaccination options;
3. learning to identify the symptoms of pertussis to ensure you seek treatment early; and
4. ensure older siblings are up to date with their vaccinations.

More information is available in the enclosed brochure.

Immunity from the whooping cough vaccine fades over six to ten years so even if you have been vaccinated in childhood, you should discuss the need for a booster dose with your doctor or health provider.

For more information you should contact your immunisation provider, state or territory health department or public health authority. Contact details are provided on the enclosed brochure.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'C. Baggoley'.

Professor Chris Baggoley
Australian Government Chief Medical Officer