



John Della Bosca MLC
Minister for Health
Minister for the Central Coast
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

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Whooping cough epidemic in NSW

NSW is in the grip of a whooping cough epidemic with the number of people diagnosed in the first half of the year, five times that for the same period last year.

NSW Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, said more than 8,700 cases have been reported in the first six months of the year, almost the same amount for all of 2008.

“This is a serious illness which can result in hospitalisation, even death, so new parents, grandparents and any other adult who regularly cares for infants less than 12 months of age, should get a free booster,” the Minister said.

“Earlier this year, public health officers wrote to all new parents throughout NSW advising of arrangements for free vaccinations and contacted all GPs to encourage vaccination to stem the rise in whooping cough cases.

“General Practitioners were also advised about the availability of free adult vaccine.

“NSW Health recommends all children be given the combination vaccine to protect against six conditions including whooping cough, this vaccine is normally given at two months, four months and six months of age,” the Minister said.

“However, parents and GPs are now being urged to bring the first dose forward to six weeks of age to provide earlier protection.

“A further vaccine is given at four years, with a booster due at around age 15 through the school-based vaccination program.

“Symptoms of whooping cough initially may include runny nose, tiredness and mild fever.

“Coughing bouts then develop followed by a big deep gasp that sometimes produces a whooping sound. Vomiting may follow these bouts of coughing. Adults often just have an ongoing cough without the whoop,” the Minister said.

“Whooping cough is easily spread to other people by droplets from coughing, so it is important people are diagnosed and treated early with special antibiotics to help stop it spreading.

“They should also stay away from others, especially small children, until they’re no longer infectious,” the Minister added.

For a range of health information go to www.health.nsw.gov.au