



# Safety Information

SI: 003/08

**3 December  
2008**

- NSW is in the middle of a whooping cough (pertussis) outbreak
- Check that you are vaccinated
- Whooping cough can be a life-threatening illness for babies
- If you have a new or persistent cough, see your GP immediately

#### Distributed to:

- Directors of Clinical Governance
- Chief Executives
- Directors of Clinical Operations

#### We recommend you also inform:

- Medical Directors
- Directors of Nursing
- Infection control professionals
- Staff in Paediatric units
- Staff in NICU
- Staff in Recovery Rooms
- Staff in Operating Theatres
- Staff in ICU
- Staff in Emergency Departments
- Staff in Transplant Wards
- Staff in Oncology wards
- Staff in Respiratory wards

#### Quality and Safety Branch

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[SAFETYALERTS@doh.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:SAFETYALERTS@doh.health.nsw.gov.au)

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<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/quality/sabs/index.html>

## Whooping Cough

There has been a large increase in the number of people diagnosed with whooping cough (pertussis) in NSW. This year more than 5000 cases have been reported.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PERTUSSIS

- Persistent cough may be whooping cough in older children and adults.
- Adults can pass the infection on to vulnerable people and babies.
- For young children the cough occurs in bouts (often with a 'whoop') which may be followed by vomiting.
- Whooping cough is infectious up to 3 weeks after onset of cough.
- Vaccination does not give lifelong protection and reinfection can occur.

### PROTECT YOUR PATIENTS AND YOURSELF

- Use additional precautions (droplet transmission) when you deal with coughing patients who may have whooping cough.
- Ask the infection control team for advice if you're caring for a patient with whooping cough.
- Clinical staff must have an adult dTpa vaccine (as outlined in PD2007\_006 Occupational Assessment, Screening & Vaccination Against Specified Infectious Diseases).
- If you have a new or persistent cough, see your GP or staff health promptly.
- If you are diagnosed with whooping cough, stay away from work and infants for 3 weeks or until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment.

#### Additional information:

Whooping Cough factsheet available at:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/pertussis.html>

Local Public Health Unit contact details can be found at:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/Infectious/plus.asp>

### Recommended actions by Area Health Services

1. Forward information to appropriate area for action.
2. Ensure a system is in place to document actions taken.