

Whooping cough (pertussis)

A booster should be given to:

- > Adults planning a pregnancy OR as soon as possible after the birth of their baby.
- > Carers of young children such as grandparents, older siblings and any other adults living in the same house
- > Adults working with young children (e.g. child care workers, teachers)
- > All adults at 50 years of age (combined with the tetanus and diphtheria vaccine booster)
- > Any other adult wishing to protect themselves

If I have already had whooping cough, can I get it again?

Yes, natural infection does not guarantee lifelong protection, and neither does vaccination against the disease. Protection after the disease or the vaccine lasts around six to ten years.

Are whooping cough vaccines safe?

Like all medications, vaccines may have side effects. Most side effects are minor, last a short time and do not require special treatment.

Some possible side effects of the whooping cough vaccine include fever, nausea, headache, tiredness, aching muscles and redness, soreness or swelling where the injection was given. Serious side effects are extremely rare.

Contact your doctor or immunisation provider if you or your child has a reaction following immunisation which you are concerned about.

How do I get the vaccine if I am not eligible for a free vaccine?

Your doctor can give you a prescription for the vaccine. The price of the vaccine varies depending on the pharmacy you use.



For more information

Immunisation Section
SA Health
 PO Box 6, Rundle Mall, SA, 5000
 Telephone: 8226 7177
www.health.sa.gov.au/pehs

Non-English speaking: for information in languages other than English, call the Interpreting and Translating Centre and ask them to call the Department of Health. This service is available at no cost to you, contact (08) 8226 1990.

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Who should be vaccinated?



What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough (also known as pertussis) is a highly contagious disease caused by infection of the respiratory tract.

Whooping cough is serious in children less than two years of age, where hospitalisation is often necessary.

Every year whooping cough kills about 250,000 children worldwide.

Many surviving children are left with brain damage. Serious complications from whooping cough include pneumonia, bleeding into the nose, eyes or brain caused by the coughing episodes.

In Australia, large outbreaks of whooping cough occur every three to four years.

Immunisation is the best way to prevent whooping cough.

How is it spread?

Whooping cough is spread by coughing, sneezing or direct contact with infected nose or mouth secretions (like sharing food and kissing).

It is most infectious when the cold-like symptoms first appear. If left untreated, a person with whooping cough can spread the disease to other people during the first three weeks from the time they start coughing.

What are the symptoms?

Whooping cough starts with cold-like symptoms – a runny nose, sore watery eyes, tiredness and sometimes a mild fever.

After three to seven days a dry, irritating cough develops. In babies coughing episodes are followed by a deep breath in that can sound like a 'whoop'. The 'whoop' is more obvious in young children. Babies can go blue and stop breathing during the coughing episodes. Some people vomit after coughing.

Adults and older children suffer bouts of coughing that can last for many weeks and can lead to complications such as rib fractures, urinary incontinence and pneumonia.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get whooping cough but it is particularly serious in children under two years of age where hospitalisation is often necessary.

The disease is very serious in babies who are under 6 months of age as they are not fully protected by vaccination. Most babies with whooping cough will have caught it from a parent, grandparent or sibling. Most hospitalisations and deaths occur in babies under 6 months of age.

How can whooping cough be prevented?

Immunisation is the best way to prevent whooping cough.

The whooping cough vaccine is not available as a single vaccine. It is only available in combination with other vaccines, generally Diphtheria and Tetanus.

Combination vaccines that protect against whooping cough are available free* under the National Immunisation Program for children in specific age groups. It is important that children receive all doses on time.

Recommended ages to receive vaccination against whooping cough

Dose number	Age
1	6-8 weeks
2	4 months
3	6 months
4 (Booster 1)	3½ - 4 years
5 (Booster 2)	Year 9 in school

Babies require 3 doses, followed later in life by 2 booster doses. The first dose can be given from 6 to 8 weeks of age and will provide some protection but the best level of protection is not achieved until after the 3rd dose, given at 6 months of age. This leaves babies below 6 months of age at risk of catching the disease.

Adults caring for, or working with babies should ensure they receive a booster vaccine. Protection against whooping cough from either vaccination or having the disease is not life long.

The vaccine for adults must be purchased on a prescription.

* Your doctor may charge a consultation fee.