Dear Parents,

A case of Whooping Cough has been reported in your child’s class. Please find attached an information sheet from NSW Health to help understand this infection.

Whooping cough (sometimes called pertussis) is a serious respiratory infection that causes a long coughing illness. In babies, the infection can sometimes lead to pneumonia and occasionally brain damage and can be even life threatening. Older children and adults can get whooping cough and can spread it to others, including babies.

IDENTIFY Symptoms

- Whooping cough starts like a cold with a blocked or runny nose, sneezing, a mild fever and an occasional cough.
- The cough gets worse and severe bouts of uncontrollable coughing develop. Coughing bouts can be followed by vomiting, choking or taking a big gasping breath which causes a “whooping” sound. The cough can last for many weeks and can be worse at night.
- Some newborns may not cough at all but stop breathing completely and turn blue. Other babies have difficulties feeding or they can choke and gag.
- Older children and adults may just have a mild cough that doesn’t go away. In adults the cough commonly lasts 5-7 weeks, sometimes longer. In China, whooping cough is known as the 100-day cough!

PREVENT Spread

A person with whooping cough can spread it to others in the first 3 weeks of illness. Bacteria coughed into the air can be inhaled by babies, children or adults nearby. These people are then in danger of getting whooping cough, usually about a week later. It spreads easily through families, childcare centres and schools, so it’s important to act fast.

See your GP

Any one with symptoms should see a doctor as soon as possible. Your GP can test for whooping cough. Early diagnosis is especially important for new parents and people who have regular contact with babies.

Antibiotics

If whooping cough is detected early enough, your doctor may prescribe a course of antibiotics. After 5 days of antibiotic treatment, enough bacteria are killed to stop spread to others, although their cough can linger for weeks.

Without antibiotics, people with whooping cough can spread the infection in the first 3 weeks.

In some situations, other people who have been in contact with an infectious person may also need antibiotics to help prevent them getting whooping cough, especially if they are babies or if they have close contact with babies. This is called prophylaxis.

Stay home

People diagnosed with whooping cough should stay away from work, school or childcare until no longer infectious. Ask your doctor for a medical certificate and find out when it’s safe to return.

You don’t want to pass whooping cough on. It’s a good idea to stay away from others if you’re coughing and especially stay away from babies.

Regards

Ted Langford