25 February 2011

A case of whooping cough has been reported to the school. The following information details the symptoms of which you need to be aware. If you become aware your child is displaying symptoms of whooping cough please seek medical confirmation. To assist the school in monitoring any progress of this condition, please inform the office.

Whooping Cough (Pertussis) Dept of Health Fact Sheet

Last updated: 15 Nov 2010

What is whooping cough?
Whooping cough can be a life threatening infection in babies. Whooping cough in babies can lead to apnoea (pauses in normal breathing), pneumonia, feeding problems and weight loss, seizures, brain damage and, in some cases, death. Older children and adults can get whooping cough too and pass it on to babies.

What are the symptoms?
• Whooping cough usually begins like a cold with a blocked or runny nose, tiredness, mild fever and a cough.

• Older children and adults may just have a cough that lasts for many weeks. They may not have the whoop.

How is it spread?
• Whooping cough is spread when an infectious person coughs bacteria into the air which can be inhaled by people nearby. If they are not treated early, people with whooping cough are infectious in the first three weeks of their illness.

• Whooping cough spreads easily through families, childcare centres and at school.

Who is at risk?
• Anyone can get whooping cough. People living in the same household as someone with whooping cough are especially at risk.

• Immunisation reduces the risk of infection but immunity fades over time. You can still get whooping cough even if you've been immunised.
**How is it prevented?**
Whooping cough vaccines provide good protection from infection but immunity fades which means that boosters are needed.

**Immunisation for babies**
- Babies need to be immunised at 2 months, 4 months and 6 months. The first dose can be given as early as 6 weeks of age.
- Getting your baby vaccinated on time gives them some protection when they are most at risk of severe illness.
- If your baby's vaccines are overdue, see your GP now to catch up.

**Immunisation for older children**
- A whooping cough booster is needed at 4 years of age.
- A second whooping cough booster is given in high school through the NSW School Immunisation Program.

**Immunisation for adults**
A booster for adults is recommended for:
- Both parents when they are planning a pregnancy, or just after the baby is born
- Other adult household members, grandparents and carers of infants under 12 months of age.
- Adults working with young children, especially health care and child care workers.

**If you are a close contact of someone with whooping cough:**
- If you have been exposed to someone with whooping cough early in their illness while they are infectious, watch out for symptoms and see your doctor if you get a new cough.
- Some babies and some pregnant women need antibiotics to prevent whooping cough infection if they have had significant contact with an infectious person.