

What is Whooping Cough?

Pertussis (widely known as whooping cough) is one of the most contagious vaccine-preventable diseases. Pertussis is caused by bacteria which are spread through coughing or sneezing.

Most severe cases of pertussis hospitalisations or deaths occur in infants aged less than 2 months. Most of these young infants catch the disease from adults rather than other children

Pertussis causes violent spells of uncontrollable coughing spasms which make it very difficult for a baby to breathe, or feed. Children make a "whooping" sound when they attempt to breathe in against a windpipe severely narrowed by mucus. They may go blue, and often vomit from coughing. These symptoms can last for eight weeks. Pneumonia or seizures can also develop.

Pertussis can be very distressing for both the child and the parents who feel unable to help, coughing attacks may occur up to 40 times during the day and night and the entire family can become exhausted.

The youngest infants are of particular concern as little or no protection from the mother is passed on to the newborn in breast milk or across the placenta. Newborn infants who catch pertussis, often from a parent with pertussis, are most likely to develop severe disease.

In Australia

In Australia, there are epidemics of pertussis every few years. The most recent one was in 2008 and is continuing into 2009.

Children who are too young to be fully vaccinated and those who have not completed the primary vaccination series are at highest risk for severe illness.



Immunisation is the best way to prevent pertussis. A baby is not fully protected against pertussis until they have received 3 doses of vaccine, which does not happen until 6 months of age

What is this study about?

At present the current child immunisation schedule recommends vaccination when a child is two, four, and six months and again at four years of age.

The aim of this study is to see if giving babies the pertussis vaccine (Pa vaccine) before 2 months old results in earlier protection, as measured by blood antibodies.

Have newborn infants received a pertussis vaccine before?

Yes 4 small studies have been conducted in Australia, US, Germany and Italy. No significant side effects were seen

What does this study involve?

- 5 clinic consultations (approx 45 minutes each) over an 8 month period for immunisation Your infant will receive all the routine scheduled vaccines. Some infants will receive a pertussis vaccine at birth.
- Your infant will be under the care of an experienced paediatrician and immunisation research nurse.
- Parents will be provided with a diary card and thermometer and asked to record any reactions for 7 days following vaccination.
- To measure the antibody (protection) level and assess how well the vaccine has worked; all infants will need to have 4 blood tests taken over the 8 month period of this study, at 6 and 10 weeks, 6 & 8 months. A blood sample will also be taken from the mother shortly after birth.
- Visits will be conducted at your convenience, as far as possible and in a pleasant child friendly environment.
- Regular telephone contact will be maintained during the study period.
- Participation in this study is free of charge and you will be reimbursed for any parking and travel expenses incurred.

For further details Contact Dr Nick Wood or Study Nurse on 9845 1434 or mobile 0423 798 560

**Immunisation Research
The Children's Hospital Westmead 2145**



- 👉 Pertussis often occurs in newborn infants
- 👉 The disease is usually contracted from adults (parents), not other children
- 👉 In young infants the disease is more severe and can result in hospitalisation and/or death
- 👉 Pertussis immunisation commences at 2 months of age
- 👉 Full protection is not reliably achieved until after the 3rd dose (at 6 months of age)
- 👉 There is a real need to provide protection to the most vulnerable in our community

This project has been approved by The Children's Hospital at Westmead Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this study, please do not hesitate to contact Eleanor Thackray, Secretary of the Ethics Committee (02 9845 3017)

Whooping cough



PROTECTING
BABIES
FROM
BIRTH

**A NEW PROJECT FROM
THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AT WESTMEAD
INTRODUCTORY PARENT INFORMATION**