



Media Release

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Subject: **Under Ones at Risk from Whooping Cough**

The Medical Officer of Health has warned that if someone in a Nelson Tasman household has a persistent cough, and there is a baby in the house under one year old, it is important to contact a doctor immediately.

Whooping Cough is now widespread in the Nelson Tasman community. This disease is particularly dangerous for babies under one year old, as well as for people who are immune suppressed, or elderly.

During November Nelson Tasman had 67 cases with a further 33 under investigation. In Marlborough there were 8 cases with 2 under investigation.

Medical Officer of Health Dr Jill Sherwood said, "If someone in your household has a persistent cough, and you have a baby in the house under one year old, contact your GP as it may be important for all of the household to have antibiotics to protect that child from whooping cough."

She said symptoms usually include a cough lasting longer than two weeks with spasms of coughing that may end in vomiting or difficulty breathing, or a cough with a whooping sound.

"Adults are often the source of infection that spreads to children. It is important that adults don't cough around babies and children.

"Complications can include pneumonia, and ear infections," said Dr Sherwood.

She said women in the later stages of pregnancy should avoid close contact with people who are coughing to avoid becoming infected and passing whooping cough onto their newborn baby.

"This disease is especially serious for babies who have not yet been immunised, however babies are not protected until they have received their three initial vaccinations, due at six weeks, three months and five months.

"The vaccination is free and available from a GP or Practice Nurse," said Dr Sherwood.

"Whooping cough is a preventable disease. If babies and young children are immunised, they can reduce their chance of this serious and sometimes life threatening illness.

"Children should have booster doses at four and eleven years. Having these vaccinations on time gives babies and children the best protection from whooping cough."

Whooping cough symptoms start with a runny nose and dry cough. Coughing gets worse over the next few weeks developing into attacks of coughing. The 'whoop' sound may occur as

babies draw a breath after a long coughing attack. Babies might go blue or stop breathing during coughing attacks. Older children and adults may not 'whoop'; they may just have a cough. Babies, children and some adults may vomit after coughing attacks.

Babies who do not receive their immunisations on time have a five times greater risk of being hospitalised with whooping cough. International data shows that seven out of ten babies under 6 months of age who contract the disease are hospitalised and one in 200 of those who are hospitalised will die from the disease.

For further information on whooping cough call Healthline on freephone 0800 611 116. For all further inquiries about having your baby or child immunised, talk to your GP.

ENDS

August	14
September	37
October	45 cases
November	67 cases with another 33 currently under investigation

Marlborough

August	0
September	0
October	3
November	8 cases with another 2 under investigation