



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

National Immunisation Office
Units 8/9 Manor Street Business Park
Manor Street
Dublin 7

Tel. 01 8676108
Fax. 01 8682943

IMPORTANT NEWS

12th November, 2012

Increase in whooping cough (pertussis) in Ireland & pertussis vaccination for general practice staff

Dear Doctor

From 1st January to the end of September 2012, 368 pertussis cases have been reported to HPSC – more than double the number of cases reported for the same time period in 2011. Most cases are less than 5 years of age but many cases have been reported in adolescents and adults. Unfortunately in recent months there have been two fatalities in very young infants too young to be vaccinated.

Pertussis should be considered in patients who present with a suspicious persistent cough and any such patients should be advised to limit their contact with young babies. Details of antibiotic treatment and prophylaxis of pertussis can be found in the new guidance documents below. Pertussis is a notifiable disease and further advice is available from your Departments of Public Health.

A booster dose of a low dose pertussis containing vaccine (Tdap - Boostrix) is now recommended for health care staff in contact with infants, pregnant women, and the immunocompromised to prevent nosocomial transmission. This includes all general practice staff and Tdap vaccine is now available from the HSE National Cold Chain Service for you and your staff.

In addition pregnant women after 20 weeks gestation and adults who have not received a pertussis containing vaccine in the last 10 years may receive Tdap to protect themselves and infants. In these instances the vaccine must be sourced privately. Pertussis vaccination of pregnant woman is currently under review nationally and we will inform you of any changes.

Actions required by you

- Encourage all parents to have their children appropriately vaccinated on time. This is especially important for families who have just had or are expecting a new baby, as young infants are most at risk.
- Place an order for Tdap (Boostrix) vaccine for your practice staff with the HSE National Cold Chain Service.
- Advise antenatal mothers and mothers of young babies that they should keep their baby away from anyone with a cough until at least four months of age when the child has had their second pertussis containing vaccines.
- Consider the possibility of pertussis in patients who present with a suspicious persistent cough.
- Notify any cases of pertussis to the local Department of Public Health.

Further information is available at

http://www.immunisation.ie/en/Downloads/NIACGuidelines/PDFFile_15485_en.pdf

<http://www.hpsc.ie/hpsc/A-Z/VaccinePreventable/PertussisWhoopingCough/Guidance/File,13577,en.pdf>

<http://www.immunisation.ie/en/HealthcareProfessionals/Pertussis/>

Yours sincerely,

Dr Kevin Kelleher
Assistant National Director of Population Health - Health Protection
Medical Council Registration Number: 19719