



## Catch up on immunisation now to protect tamariki from whooping cough this winter

Whānau Āwhina Plunket says the recent death of three babies from whooping cough coupled with low childhood immunisation coverage means there is a real risk of a whooping cough outbreak this winter.

Chief Nurse Zoe Tipa says now is the time to catch up on immunisation to protect pēpi, tamariki and whānau.

“There is always a lot of misinformation circulating particularly on social media about immunisation, often that increases when a tragic event occurs. It is quite normal to be concerned and not know what to do and whose advice to follow.

“It’s really important to talk to a trusted health professional like your doctor, your Plunket nurse, kaiāwhina or community karitāne. They will be able to guide you to make an informed decision. You can also ring PlunketLine day or night on 0800 933 922 to speak to a nurse – we’re always here to help.

“Immunising your child is one of the best ways to set them up for a healthy future. It protects them from whooping cough, measles and other serious preventable diseases and reduces the risk of them needing hospital care.

“While it is best for your child to be immunised on time, we know life is busy with tamariki under-five and sometimes other things get in the way. If your child has missed any immunisations, it’s not too late to catch up,” says Dr Tipa.

A new website [www.immunise.health.nz](http://www.immunise.health.nz) has been set up designed to help whānau learn more about FREE childhood immunisation available in Aotearoa New Zealand, and keep track of what’s due when and where to go.

### Whooping cough: what you need to know

- Whooping cough starts like a cold with a runny nose, cough and fever, so it can be hard to recognise as a serious illness at first. After seven to ten days the cough becomes more severe and causes coughing fits that may end with a ‘whoop’, dry retching or vomiting. This illness is unpleasant for anyone, but it is life-threatening for babies.
- Whooping cough in young babies is unpredictable and can get worse very quickly. Parents should also seek urgent medical advice if their baby:
  - Stops breathing
  - Goes blue with coughing
  - Appears to have a cold, then cough and have difficulty breathing
  - Gets exhausted from coughing
  - Is not able to feed properly because of coughing and difficulty breathing
  - Loses weight because of difficulty feeding and because the cough causes them to vomit (be sick).



- Immunisation is available FREE at your GP or some pharmacies for:
  - All children and young people aged under 18 years. Babies and young children should get their vaccine doses on time at six weeks, three months and five months old. Booster doses are then available at four and 11 years old.
  - Pregnant people for every pregnancy. Immunisation protects babies in their first 6 weeks of life until they can receive their own immunisation.
  - Adults at 45 and 65 years of age (same vaccine as the tetanus booster)
  - Some groups at higher risk of becoming very unwell if they catch whooping cough (e.g. if you have a chronic respiratory condition, congenital heart disease or are immunocompromised)

ENDS

### **About Whānau Āwhina Plunket**

Pēpi, tamariki and whānau are at the heart of Whānau Āwhina Plunket. The charity is Aotearoa New Zealand's largest health and wellbeing support service for tamariki – seeing 290,000 under-fives. About 80% of newborns are enrolled with Whānau Āwhina Plunket each year.

Our nurses provide clinical assessments, and along with Kaiāwhina and Community Karitāne, support whānau and families, through home and clinic visits, as well as PlunketLine 0800 933 922, a free 24/7 telephone advice service for parents.

Our website [plunket.org.nz](http://plunket.org.nz) is one of the country's most widely read digital child health resources, with 1.8 million visits each year. It is data free which means you don't need mobile data to access, and you can choose to view in English or te reo Māori.

Boosting pēpi immunisations in Waikato Pictured: Te Whatu Ora Clinical Nurse Specialist DeArna Randell-Armstrong and Plunket Community Karitāne Helen McGrath have teamed up providing immunisation for pēpi up to 10 weeks old at home.

