23 March 2016

Dear Parents,

Re: Whooping cough (Pertussis)

Sunshine Coast Public Health Unit is concerned with the increasing numbers of whooping cough cases in the Sunshine Coast area. We have seen more cases in the first 3 months of this year than we have in the same period in any of the 5 previous years. We have alerted all GPs on the Coast of this issue.

The following steps will assist in preventing the spread of this infectious disease:

**Vaccinate** – Protection against whooping cough is included in the routine vaccinations given to children at 6 weeks, 4 months, 6 months and at 4 years of age. Children and teenagers who are behind in their vaccinations or have never been vaccinated may be eligible for free catch-up vaccines. Your GP will be able to provide you with more information. Vaccination is also funded for women in their 3rd trimester of pregnancy.

**Test & Treat** – If you or your child develops a persistent, troublesome cough (usually without fever) please see your GP. The test for whooping cough is a swab taken from your nose. There are only a few antibiotics that are effective against whooping cough and it is important that you complete the full course.

**Isolate** – while waiting for your results please remain at home. Do not go to school until you have your results and stay away from susceptible people like the very young, the elderly and pregnant women. If your test is positive for whooping cough, you need to remain isolated until you have completed 5 full days of an appropriate antibiotic. If you do not wish to take antibiotics, you must remain isolated for 21 days after your first symptoms such as a runny nose or coughing.

Your school is helping us to keep your family healthy. If you suspect your child has whooping cough, please inform your school.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me.

Yours sincerely

Deb Neucom
Public Health Nurse

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