

# Think Whooping cough

## Cases are rising...

Anyone can catch whooping cough but very young babies and young children who have not been protected against it via the maternal pertussis vaccine or received three doses of their own 6-in-1 vaccine are particularly at risk of severe disease. It's crucial pregnant women have the vaccine which will help protect their unborn baby until they are old enough to be routinely vaccinated at 8 weeks old.

## Symptoms to look out for:

- Runny nose
- Coughing spasms with:
  - Worsening severity
  - A gasping sound or 'whoop'
  - Difficulty in breathing
- Change in colour of the face

However, in young infants, the typical 'whoop' may never develop and coughing spasms may be followed by periods of apnoea. In older children and adults, the disease may present as persistent cough without these classic symptoms.

Whooping cough is a serious illness that is highly infectious.  
If you suspect whooping cough:

- Ensure the patient is in an area where they cannot pass the infection to other vulnerable people such as infants who have not had three doses of pertussis containing vaccine, and pregnant women.
- Immediately notify your local Health Protection Team (HPT).

## Vaccination saves lives

Vaccination is the only effective means to protect young babies and children from whooping cough.

Use every opportunity to check immunisation history. We recommend that healthcare professionals discuss the pertussis vaccine with the women in their care as part of their conversations about all vaccines that are recommended during pregnancy, or the 6-in-1 vaccine for babies who haven't received them.

