

Dana's story

Baby Dana was born a happy, healthy girl. She was breastfeeding well and putting on weight.

At 11 days old, she developed a blocked nose and was unsettled at night. Dana's parents acted quickly and saw the GP. When she was three weeks old, Dana developed an occasional cough and appeared to gag, and her parents returned to the GP. As soon as Dana tested positive for whooping cough, she went straight to hospital.

Soon after arriving, Dana had her first coughing bout where she turned blue and needed oxygen. On the third day at hospital, Dana developed pneumonia and she was placed on a ventilator. She was transferred to intensive care.

On the fifth day, the whooping cough toxins caused her organs to shut down and Dana had a cardiac arrest. She was only 32 days old when she died.

Nobody knows where Dana was infected with whooping cough. It may have been at her sibling's school or preschool. A loving relative or friend, or a complete stranger may have unknowingly passed the infection on.

Whooping cough affects people of all ages, but the real danger of the devastating disease is on young babies like Dana.



Where do I go for further information?

For more information please contact your doctor, local public health unit or community health centre. Look under NSW Government at the front of the White Pages.

Public Health Units in NSW

METROPOLITAN AREAS	RURAL AREAS
Northern Sydney/Central Coast	Greater Southern
Hornsby 02 9477 9400	Goulburn 02 4824 1837
Gosford 02 4349 4845	Albury 02 6080 8900
South Eastern Sydney/Illawarra	Greater Western
Randwick 02 9382 8333	Broken Hill 08 8080 1499
Wollongong 02 4221 6700	Dubbo 02 6841 5569
Sydney South West	Bathurst 02 6339 5601
Camperdown 02 9515 9420	Hunter/New England
Sydney West	Newcastle 02 4924 6477
Penrith 02 4734 2022	Tamworth 02 6764 8000
Parramatta 02 9840 3603	North Coast
	Port Macquarie 02 6588 2750
	Lismore 02 6620 7500

Websites

National Centre for Immunisation Research & Surveillance
www.ncirs.edu.au

Immunise Australia Program
(Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing)
www.immunise.health.gov.au

NSW Health Immunisation Program
www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/immunisation/index.asp

Whooping Cough



1 IDENTIFY
the disease



2 PROTECT
your child



3 PREVENT
the spread

That's why it's up to everyone to

IDENTIFY • PROTECT • PREVENT



IDENTIFY

What is whooping cough?

- Whooping cough (or pertussis) is a serious respiratory infection that causes a long coughing illness. In babies, it can lead to pneumonia and brain damage.
- Whooping cough can be life-threatening for babies. Newborns are not immune and they often get extremely sick.
- Older children and adults can get whooping cough and can spread it to others, including babies.
- Antibiotics can prevent whooping cough spreading if given early but the cough often continues after treatment.

What are the symptoms?

- Whooping cough starts like a cold with a blocked or runny nose, sneezing, a mild fever and an occasional cough.
- The cough gets worse and severe bouts of uncontrollable coughing develop. Coughing bouts can be followed by vomiting, choking or taking a big gasping breath which causes a "whooping" sound. The cough can last for many weeks and can be worse at night.
- Some newborns don't cough at all but stop breathing and turn blue.
- Older children and adults may just have a mild cough that doesn't go away.

How is whooping cough spread?

- A person with whooping cough can spread it to others in the first 3 weeks of illness. Bacteria coughed into the air can be inhaled by babies, children or adults nearby. These people are then in danger of getting whooping cough.



PROTECT

Protect your baby

- Newborns are not immune until they have had their whooping cough vaccines. To protect them until they are immune, keep people with a cough away from your baby.
- The vaccine for babies is given at 2, 4 and 6 months. The first dose can be given as early as 6 weeks. Immunise your baby on time so they can be protected as soon as possible. If your baby's vaccines are overdue, speak to your GP about catching up.
- Whooping cough vaccine is effective but doesn't protect all babies. You still need to watch out, even if your baby is immunised.

Older children

- By immunising older children with boosters at 4 years and in high school, you give them some protection against whooping cough. This also helps to stop spread to others.
- Check if your child has been vaccinated. Look at their Blue Book, speak to your GP or ring the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register on 1800 653 809.
- Remember that even immunised children can sometimes catch whooping cough.

Adults

- Adults can get whooping cough and can spread the infection to babies. They may just have mild symptoms and may not realise that their cough could cause harm.
- If you're a new parent, you can top-up your immunity by getting a whooping cough booster. Boosters are also recommended for grandparents, couples planning a pregnancy, and for child care workers and health care workers.
- Whooping cough vaccines are available from your GP, Aboriginal Medical Service, community health centre or council clinic.



PREVENT

How can I prevent the spread of whooping cough?

- Whooping cough is highly infectious in the first 3 weeks. It spreads easily through families, childcare centres and schools, so it's important to act fast.
- Anyone with symptoms should see a doctor as soon as possible. Your GP can test for whooping cough. Early diagnosis is especially important for new parents and people who have regular contact with babies.
- If whooping cough is detected early enough, your doctor may prescribe a course of antibiotics. After 5 days of treatment, enough bacteria are killed to stop spread to others.
- In some situations, other people who have been in contact with an infectious person may also need antibiotics to help prevent the infection, especially if they are babies or if they have close contact with babies.
- People diagnosed with whooping cough should stay away from work, school or childcare until no longer infectious. Ask your doctor when it's safe to return.

