WHOOPING COUGH - (Pertussis)

Below is information from the NSW Department of Health regarding whooping cough.

WHAT IS WHOOPING COUGH (Pertussis)?
Whooping cough (or pertussis) is a disease caused by infection of the throat with the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?
- Whooping cough (pertussis) usually begins just like a cold, with a runny nose, tiredness and sometimes a mild fever.
- Coughing then develops, usually in bouts, followed by a deep gasp or “whoop”. Sometimes people vomit after coughing.
- Whooping cough (pertussis) can be very serious in very small children. They might go blue or stop breathing during coughing attacks and may need to go to the hospital.
- Older children and adults may have a less serious illness, with bouts of coughing that continue for many weeks regardless of treatment.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?
Whooping cough (pertussis) is spread to other people by droplets from coughing or sneezing. Untreated, a person with whooping cough (pertussis) can spread it to other people for up to three weeks after onset of cough.

The time between exposure and getting sick is usually seven to ten days, but can be up to three weeks.

DO I NEED TO KEEP MY CHILD HOME
Yes, until the first 5 days of a special antibiotic have been taken. Your child may have a cough for several weeks.

HOW IS IT PREVENTED?
Immunise your child on time:
- The vaccine does not give lifelong protection against whooping cough (pertussis), and protection is sometimes incomplete.
- Children need to be immunised at two, four and six months (the first dose can be given as early as 6 weeks of age).
- Booster are needed at four years of age and again at 15 years of age.
- Immunisation is available through general practitioners and some local councils.
- If you are a close contact of someone with whooping cough (pertussis):
  - Watch out for the symptoms. If symptoms develop, see your doctor, take this factsheet with you and mention your contact with whooping cough (pertussis).
  - Some close contacts at high risk (eg children under one year, children not fully vaccinated, and women at the end of their pregnancy) and others who live or work with high risk people may need to take antibiotics to prevent infection.
- If you have whooping cough (pertussis):
  - Get treated early while infectious, avoid people and stay away from young children, eg at child care centres, pre-school and school.

For further information please contact your doctor or local public health unit.

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Principal