

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a highly contagious acute bacterial infection caused by *Bordetella pertussis* affecting people of all ages. Infection is transmitted via direct close contact with an infected person. Patients are most infectious during the first 3 weeks after onset of the cough which is typically non-productive without associated fever. Other symptoms may include paroxysms of coughing, post tussive vomiting and an inspiratory whoop. Complications of illness include pneumonia, seizures and encephalitis. Vaccination is the most effective method of preventing transmission of pertussis.

**Clinically suspected cases, laboratory confirmed cases and epidemiologically linked cases of pertussis should be offered antibiotics as soon as possible – see Table 1 for antibiotic treatment options.**

The decision to initiate contact tracing in respect of pertussis infection will be made by the Consultant in Public Health Medicine (CPHM) in conjunction with relevant clinicians. Responsibility for contact tracing and organising the administration of chemoprophylaxis also lies with the CPHM.

CPHM will establish a list of close contacts and may include people living in the same household, contacts in institutional settings with an overnight stay in the same room or significant exposure encountered in a healthcare setting. Occupational health team will be involved in the management of cases or contact affecting healthcare staff. Individuals at risk of complications from infection and those at risk of transmitting the infections to others at risk of severe disease are considered priority groups for public health action.

Where healthcare workers have encountered exposure, the Occupational Health team will recommend that an assessment for chemoprophylaxis is completed.

**Chemoprophylaxis must only be prescribed if deemed appropriate after assessment. It should be given as soon as possible after diagnosis of the index case but can be offered to all eligible contacts up to 3 weeks after onset of cough in the index case. Chemoprophylaxis options are outlined in Table 1 below.**

# Pertussis – Treatment of Cases and Chemoprophylaxis for Close Contacts

Table 1 – Antibiotics for treatment and prophylaxis of pertussis

Age	Clarithromycin	Azithromycin	Erythromycin	Co-trimoxazole (if macrolides not tolerated or contra-indicated)
<b>Neonates (&lt; 1 month)</b>	<b>Preferred in neonates</b> 7.5mg/kg twice a day for 7 days	10mg/kg once a day for 3 days	Not recommended - association with hypertrophic pyloric stenosis	Not licensed for infants below 6 weeks
<b>Infants and Children (1 month – 17 years)</b>	<b>1 month - 11 years:</b> <b>Under 8kgs</b> 7.5mg/kg twice a day for 7 days  <b>8-11kg</b> 62.5mg twice a day for 7 days  <b>12-19kg</b> 125mg twice a day for 7 days  <b>20-29kg</b> 187.5mg twice a day for 7 days  <b>30-40kg</b> 250mg twice a day for 7 days  <b>12 to 17 years</b> 500mg twice a day for 7 days	<b>1 to 6 months:</b> 10mg/kg once a day for 3 days  <b>&gt; 6 months:</b> 10mg/kg (max 500mg) once a day for 3 days	<b>1 to 23 months:</b> 125mg every 6 hours for 7 days  <b>2 to 7 years:</b> 250mg every 6 hours for 7 days  <b>8 to 17 years:</b> 500mg every 6 hours for 7 days	<b>6 weeks to 5 months:</b> 120mg twice a day for 7 days  <b>6 months to 5 years:</b> 240mg twice a day for 7 days  <b>6 to 11 years:</b> 480mg twice a day for 7 days  <b>12 to 17 years:</b> 960mg twice a day for 7 days
<b>Adults</b>	500mg twice a day for 7 days	500mg once a day for 3 days	500mg every 6 hours for 7 days	960mg twice a day for 7 days
<b>Pregnant women</b>	Not recommended	Not recommended	Preferred option in last month of pregnancy. If earlier in pregnancy, refer to <a href="#">PHE Guidelines</a> for further info – risk assessment and clinical discussion required.	Contraindicated in pregnancy

Please note that antibiotics may have significant interactions with other prescribed medicines. Please check for interactions - Stockley's Interaction Checker: <https://www.medicinescomplete.com/#/interactions/stockley>

References: [Guidelines for the public health management of pertussis \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) – accessed Feb 2024

[MedicinesComplete — CONTENT > BNF > Treatment summary: Pertussis vaccine](#) – accessed Feb 2024