

Date: 28th March 2024

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Dear colleagues,

Re: Rise in Pertussis Cases

You will be aware that pertussis infections are on the rise in England. [Data](#) published by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) shows there were **553 confirmed cases in England in January alone, compared with 858 cases for the whole of last year (2023)**. This follows exceptionally low activity due to COVID-19 pandemic control measures during 2021-22.

As you know vaccination against pertussis is part of the **routine childhood immunisation schedule** (at 8,12 and 16 weeks, and a fourth dose pre-school) and as a **prenatal vaccination** offered between 20 and 32 weeks gestation (ideally after the congenital anomaly scan) to confer protection to neonates prior to their first vaccinations. Rates of these vaccination have dropped in the UK over recent years and **incidence of pertussis infection is highest in infants under 3 months of age highlighting the importance of the prenatal vaccination which offers 90% protection against confirmed disease and 97% against death in infants under 3 months of age.**

Thank you for continuing to promote these vaccinations at every opportunity.

Please suspect pertussis in patients with a cough illness lasting 14 days or more without an apparent cause plus one of the following: (a) paroxysms of coughing; (b) inspiratory 'whoop'; (c) post-tussive vomiting.

Suspected pertussis is a notifiable disease and should be notified to Hampshire and Isle of Wight UKHSA health protection team (South East) in the usual way by contacting:

Telephone: 0344 225 3861

Email: SE.AcuteResponse@ukhsa.gov.uk

Email for personal identifiable information (PII): phe.hiow@nhs.net

When notifying, it is helpful to let the HPT know if the case has had contact with pregnant individuals or children aged under 1 year, including through occupational exposure (e.g. healthcare or nursery settings). The HPT will advise on suitable testing for pertussis in primary care and further information can be found [here](#).

Further useful links and resources is available below should these be of additional interest.

Yours faithfully



Dr Debbie Chase
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Useful links and resources:

- Resources for healthcare staff to support communication around vaccines with pregnant women are [available](#).
- A recent UKHSA webinar on pertussis, specifically directed at health professionals and including relevant resources, can also be accessed using the following link: [UKHSA webinar on pertussis - Google Drive](#).



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