

# Dispelling the Myths about Whooping Cough

## Myth 1: “Whooping cough isn’t around anymore. It’s a disease of the past.”

- ✓ **Fact:** Australia is currently experiencing a whooping cough epidemic.<sup>1</sup> In fact, there are more people being diagnosed with whooping cough now, than ever before.<sup>1</sup> Last year, four cases of whooping cough were diagnosed every hour.<sup>1</sup>

## Myth 2: “Whooping cough is nothing more than an annoying cough.”

- ✓ **Fact:** In adults, the disease is mild, but may cause coughing episodes for up to 100 days.<sup>2</sup> The main issue lies in adults passing it on to babies under six months of age, who are not adequately protected. Whooping cough is highly contagious, so you can easily spread it just by talking, sneezing, coughing or a simple kiss. The disease is serious in babies and can cause them to stop breathing (and turn blue), contract pneumonia, have a seizure, suffer brain damage or be fatal.<sup>2</sup>

## Myth 3: “I’ve already had whooping cough (or been vaccinated as a child), so I can’t get it.”

- ✓ **Fact:** Whether you’ve had the disease or the vaccine, immunity to whooping cough only lasts for approximately six to ten years.<sup>3</sup> When was your last whooping cough vaccination?

## Myth 4: “Whooping cough is serious in babies, so I only need to get my kids vaccinated.”

- ✓ **Fact:** Whooping cough vaccination is also recommended for the following adults\*:<sup>4</sup>

\* Those who have not had a previous adolescent or adult booster.

- Couples planning a pregnancy
- Grandparents
- Healthcare workers
- New parents, as soon as possible after the birth
- Other household adult members or carers of young children
- Childcare workers

## Myth 5: “Only new parents can get the adult whooping cough jab for free.”

- ✓ **Fact:** Depending on which State you live in, different programs exist. To check who is eligible for free adult whooping cough vaccination in your State & where you can get the jab, please refer to [www.whoopingcough.com.au](http://www.whoopingcough.com.au)



For further information, talk to your doctor.

[www.whoopingcough.com.au](http://www.whoopingcough.com.au)

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“ I’ve helped protect my newborn by protecting myself. ”

Have you had your adult whooping cough vaccination?

Learn more about whooping cough



Recognise whooping cough through real cases



Understand what’s happening in your state



Educate your friends and family



Visit: [www.whoopingcough.com.au](http://www.whoopingcough.com.au)

References: 1. Australian Government DoHA, National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System. Accessed on 30th May, 2011 at [http://www9.health.gov.au/cda/Source/Rpt\\_3.cfm](http://www9.health.gov.au/cda/Source/Rpt_3.cfm). 2. Fitzgerald, Dominic; Whooping Cough; Medical Observer 18 Sept 2006. 3. National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance of Vaccine Preventable Diseases. Fact Sheet on Pertussis vaccine for Australians: information for GPs and immunisation providers. <http://www.ncirs.edu.au/immunisation/fact-sheets/pertussis-fact-sheet.pdf>. Accessed on 6th July, 2011. 4. NHMRC, The Australian Immunisation Handbook, 2008; 9th Edition: Pertussis: 227-239. sanofi-aventis australia pty ltd. ABN 31 008 558 807. Locked Bag 2227 North Ryde Business Centre NSW 1670. Customer Service Enquiries 1800 829 468. AU.WHOOPINGCOUGH.11.06.004