

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 1300 066 055

Save the Date to Vaccinate

It's important to make sure that vaccinations are given on time so that babies are protected early and not at risk of catching serious diseases. The 'Save the Date to Vaccinate' phone App may help you ensure that your child's vaccinations are given on time.



Check out the 'Save the Date to Vaccinate' website for useful information and resources such as the ability to print a personalised immunisation schedule for your child(ren) and videos at www.immunisation.health.nsw.gov.au

Websites

NSW Health Immunisation Programs
www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation

NSW Health Whooping Cough (Pertussis)
www.health.nsw.gov.au/pertussis

Whooping Cough



That's why it's up to everyone to

IDENTIFY • PROTECT • PREVENT



Health



Health



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.



PROTECT

Protect your baby

- Pregnant women should be vaccinated in the third trimester (preferably at 28 weeks) so their immunity transfers to their baby to protect them during the first few months of life, until they are old enough to be vaccinated.
- The first course of whooping cough vaccine for babies is given at 6 weeks, 4 months and 6 months of age.
- It is important to vaccinate your baby on time so they can be protected as soon as possible.
- If your baby's vaccinations are overdue, speak to your GP about catching up now.
- Whooping cough vaccine is effective but doesn't protect all babies. You still need to 'watch out', even if your baby is vaccinated, by keeping people with a cough away from them and asking close adult family members and carers to be vaccinated if they have not had a whooping cough vaccine in the past 10 years.

Older children

- By vaccinating older children at 18 months and 4 years of age and again in the first year of high school, you boost their protection against whooping cough. This also helps to stop spread of the disease to young babies and others.
- Check that all of your children have been fully vaccinated.
- Remember that vaccinated children can still 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.
- Pregnant women should be vaccinated in the third trimester (preferably at 28 weeks) of each pregnancy, even if the pregnancies are close together.
- If whooping cough vaccine is not given during pregnancy, new mothers should be vaccinated as soon as possible after delivery and before leaving hospital.
- Adult family members and carers who have close contact with newborn babies should be vaccinated, at least 2 weeks before any contact, if they have not had a whooping cough vaccine in the past 10 years.
- Child care and health care workers should get a booster every 10 years.



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 for 5 days.
- 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.

