

Health and Safety Alert

Increasing Whooping Cough Cases



Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

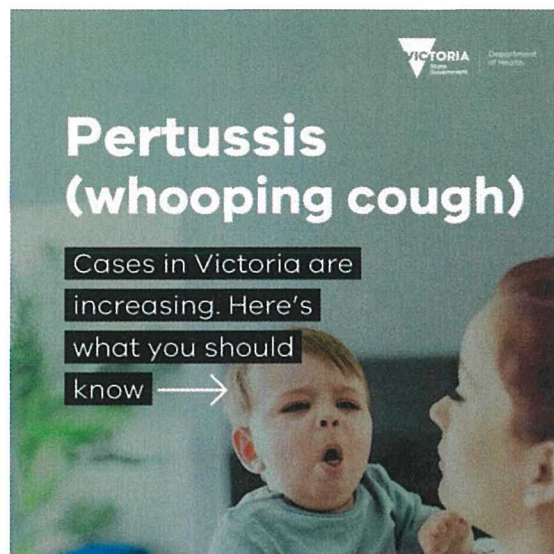
The Victorian Health Department has issued a health alert entitled “**Increasing pertussis (whooping cough) cases in Victoria**”. The key messages from the alert are:

- Cases of pertussis (whooping cough) are increasing in Victoria, mostly affecting children aged 10-12 years.
- Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory illness known for causing a cough, and can lead to life threatening infections in babies.
- Symptoms of pertussis may be very similar to other respiratory infections, especially in the early stages, meaning diagnosis by a doctor as soon as possible is important.

Prompt diagnosis, isolation and treatment can help reduce transmission and protect vulnerable infants.

Pertussis usually begins with cold-like symptoms, such as a dry cough, tiredness, runny nose, and low-grade fever. A more definitive cough follows, lasting for 10 weeks or more. The cough comes in long spells and may be followed by a high-pitched ‘whooping’ sound on inhalation.

Pertussis is mostly spread to other people by droplets from coughing or sneezing. People with pertussis are considered infectious from the onset of cold-like symptoms until 21 days after the onset of cough, or until they have received 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment.



Actions for All Schools

Please communicate this alert to staff and families:

- Provide this one-page alert to staff, or communicate the key points through your usual methods.
- Remind the school community about the importance of seeing their GP if their children exhibit any of the symptoms listed. Draft text for a parent newsletter or similar is provided over the page. Feel free to adjust the text to suit your communications, it is provided as a starting point.
- Consider any school community members (staff or parents) who are pregnant or who have infants under the age of 6 months, to ensure this important messaging is available to them.

If a student at your school is diagnosed with pertussis (whooping cough):

- The diagnosing doctor will be responsible for notification to the Department of Health
- Exclusion periods apply to diagnosed cases and contacts – see following pages.

For further information, clarification or questions, please:

- Contact the MACS health, safety and wellbeing team – ohs@macs.vic.edu.au
- Read the full alert here: [Increasing pertussis \(whooping cough\) cases in Victoria | health.vic.gov.au](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/increasing-pertussis-whooping-cough-cases-in-victoria)

To sign up to receive all health and safety alerts, please email ohs@macs.vic.edu.au
Any questions or concerns, please contact the Health, Safety and Wellbeing team –
ohs@macs.vic.edu.au