

18 May 2012

Dear _____

Thank you for your email of 13 April 2012 to Dr Pat Tuohy seeking feedback on the effectiveness of pertussis vaccine. I am replying on behalf of Dr Tuohy who is currently away, and I apologise for the delay in responding.

The goal of the pertussis immunisation schedule is to protect those most vulnerable to severe disease, in particular infants in their first year of life. In that regard, the Ministry encourages immunisation of the three primary doses on time at 6 weeks, 3 months and 5 months to protect babies as early as possible from pertussis infection.

The pertussis containing vaccines are effective but do not protect all babies. The pertussis vaccine currently used in New Zealand and other developed countries offers protection of **around 84 percent after three doses. Immunity from both the vaccine and pertussis infection wanes over time.** Consequently, some people who develop pertussis have previously been immunised.

Two free pertussis booster doses are offered on the National Immunisation Schedule, the first at age four years prior to school entry and the second at age 11 years. Adults can also receive a pertussis booster but this is not publicly funded on the National Immunisation Schedule. Adult immunisation against pertussis is recommended for those who have contact with babies or someone who has an underlying respiratory condition.

Pertussis incidence and **mortality** have **declined in the last 50 years in many places around the world mainly as a result of immunisation activities.** However, the incidence of pertussis disease has increased in countries where pertussis immunisation rates decreased in the past, for example Japan, Sweden and United Kingdom. When immunisation programmes were re-established the rates of disease decreased again.

Yours sincerely



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