

Reduce the risk of pertussis infection

Since September 2022, there has been a marked increase in pertussis cases or whooping cough in the Western Cape. Staff should have a high index of suspicion for pertussis in symptomatic young infants, which includes sending for laboratory (PCR) testing and starting azithromycin prophylaxis – see NICD guidelines (2017).

Infection prevention and control:

- Isolate hospitalised patients with suspected pertussis using standard infection control and droplet precautions until the diagnosis is excluded.
- Where patients are not hospitalised, restrict contact with others.
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriately
- Prioritise hand hygiene
- Limit transport and movement of patients outside of the room to medically-necessary purposes.

Other important measures:

- Check if all infants coming to facilities have their routine pertussis immunizations up to date. This is particularly important for family and close contacts of pregnant women and young infants.
- Pregnant staff who are able to access Tdap immunization in the private sector, are encouraged to do so, as it is not currently available in the public sector.

