

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## FREE WHOOPING COUGH VACCINE FOR NEW PARENTS AND CARERS OF INFANT CHILDREN

19 March 2009, Parramatta, NSW – WentWest and western Sydney GPs are urging new parents and other carers of infant children to visit their GP to get the free vaccine for whooping cough.

This follows last week's announcement by the NSW Department of Health that, for a limited time, the dTpa vaccine for whooping cough (pertussis) will be provided free for all new parents, grandparents and other adults who regularly care for infants less than twelve months of age. Couples who are planning a pregnancy are also eligible to receive the free vaccine.

New parents are also advised to vaccinate their babies on time and keep them away from anyone with a cough.

The free vaccine has been introduced as a result of the continuing whooping cough epidemic in NSW with more than 3,000 cases reported this year. Whooping cough immunity wanes over time, so many older children and adults are susceptible to infection and can be the source of new infections in infants.

Adjunct Associate Professor and Blacktown GP, Michael Fasher, said that babies in the first six months of life are at the highest risk of infection and serious complications, so it is important that the adults who care for them are immunised.

"Whooping cough can make adults' lives miserable with coughing fits that can last for three months. I urge you to get immunised now for your own sake and for the sake of the babies in your care. Please use this opportunity while the NSW Government offer of free vaccine lasts."

To find out more about the free whooping cough vaccine, contact your local GP.

Adj. Associate Professor Fasher is a General Practitioner in Blacktown and Co-Chair of the Western Sydney Immunisation Committee. He can be contacted for further comment on 9671 2499.

*Sources: Outbreak Response Advice, Free pertussis vaccine for new parents, NSW Department of Health*

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