

28 May 2019

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**Proposal to widen access to pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine**

Dear Sir / Madam

The New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA) wishes to provide feedback on the above proposal. Currently, vaccination against pertussis is funded for pregnant women who are between 28 to 38 weeks gestation. We note that the proposal would result in widened access to funded pertussis vaccine for all pregnant women at any time during their pregnancy, as well as for parents of infants admitted to a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit or Specialist Care Baby Unit for more than 3 days.

Vaccination against pertussis during pregnancy is important because maternal antibodies to pertussis give protection to premature and full-term infants before they can receive their first vaccination at 6 weeks of age. Currently, not all women present at precisely the right time for vaccination between 28 and 38 weeks. Furthermore, the current restrictions do not allow for protection where the baby is then born prematurely before 28 weeks. Stipulating a specific gestation period is impractical, so widening access to any stage of pregnancy makes complete sense. Accordingly, we are strongly supportive of the current proposal to widen access to pertussis vaccine which we understand is in line with the clinical advice received by the Immunisation Subcommittee of PTAC.

We hope our feedback is helpful.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kate Baddock  
NZMA Chair