

Hon Jack Snelling MP Minister for Health

Sunday, February 26, 2016

Pregnant women warned as Whooping Cough cases rise

A spike in whooping cough cases in South Australian babies has prompted the state's Health Minister to issue an urgent warning to pregnant women to make sure they are vaccinated.

A free State Government funded vaccine is available to women who are in their final trimester.

Pregnant women are urged to get the vaccine to protect their new born babies, following four cases of whooping cough in babies aged less than six months in the past three weeks.

Since January 2016, there have been a total of 24 cases of whooping cough in babies aged less than 6 months. Of these cases, more than half of the mothers had not received the vaccine.

Background

There have been 260 cases of whooping cough in South Australia this year, compared to 182 at the same time in 2016. Last year there was a total of 1,931 cases.

Children should receive the whooping cough vaccine at six weeks, four months and six months, followed by boosters at four years old and during high school.

More information about whooping cough, including symptoms, treatment and prevention, can be found at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Health Minister Jack Snelling

This is a really serious illness that can have tragic and devastating consequences for those who have not been fully immunised, particularly young babies.

It's heartbreaking that this disease continues to put the health and lives of young babies at risk and that's why the State Government has funded a free vaccine for pregnant women in South Australia.

I encourage anyone who is unsure of their immunisation status to speak to their doctor about getting a booster shot, particularly if they are pregnant or have contact with young children.

Quotes attributable to Director of Vaccinology and Immunology Research Trials Unit, Women's and Children's Hospital, Professor Helen Marshall

Research shows that maternal vaccination is the best way to protect babies from whooping cough during the first few months of their life and is safe for pregnant women and their newborns.

Because infants under six months of age are not able to complete the required series of vaccinations, they are especially vulnerable to whooping cough.

By giving their mother a vaccination in the last trimester of pregnancy, immunity is transferred to the baby, providing over 90 per cent protection against severe illness and death in babies.

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