



Brad Hazzard
Minister for Health
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MEDIA RELEASE

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FREE WHOOPING COUGH VACCINE SAVING BUBS' LIVES

The NSW Government-funded whooping cough vaccine for pregnant women has reduced the chance of infants with the illness being hospitalised by 94 per cent.

Health Minister Brad Hazzard said a NSW Health study showed that the \$6 million the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government has spent so far to provide free whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine since March 2015 had been a great success.

“Not a single child has died from whooping cough since the NSW Government introduced a free whooping cough vaccine for pregnant women,” Mr Hazzard said.

“We have invested \$22.75 million in NSW immunisation programs in 2017-18. We are committed to protecting babies and young children in this state from potentially deadly, vaccine-preventable illnesses.”

The Australian-first study, published in the journal *Vaccine*, included 234 infants from NSW, half of whom had contracted the highly contagious respiratory disease.

NSW Health’s Director of Communicable Diseases, Dr Vicky Sheppeard, said NSW Health offers free whooping cough vaccinations to all pregnant women, preferably at 28 weeks gestation, which protects babies in the first six weeks of life.

“In the off chance that a baby of a vaccinated pregnant woman contracted the illness, the study found the baby was 94 per cent less likely to require hospitalisation compared with infants of mothers who were not vaccinated,” Dr Sheppeard said.

“We urge all pregnant women to get the whooping cough vaccine, which is free and easily accessible from GPs, antenatal clinics and Aboriginal medical services.”

Whooping cough vaccines are given to children at six weeks, four months, six months and 18 months under the Commonwealth’s National Immunisation Program, followed by boosters at four and 12 years of age.

On average, 1500 children under five years have had whooping cough in NSW each year since 2009. This sadly includes four infant fatalities, the last in August 2014.

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