



## To GP practices

### Whooping cough (pertussis) vaccination programme promotion

NHS England South writes to ask for your support in increasing the uptake by pregnant women of the whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine and to notify you that a campaign to promote the vaccine will run across the region from Monday 12 September.

Whooping cough is highly infectious and can cause potentially fatal health complications in babies and young infants. **Confirmed infections have increased by 25% between 2014 and 2015 and there have been a number of recent cases.**

Yet despite this, the number of eligible women taking up the vaccine remains at around 60% nationally. Locally, there is significant variation across CCG boundary areas, with some areas recording as low as just 43% of eligible pregnant women.

The vaccine is given at a GP practice or in maternity units at the point of the foetal abnormality scan from 20 weeks of pregnancy. Ideally it should be given before 32 weeks, but it can still be given right up to the point of labour, but with reduced effectiveness

**We ask for the support of all practice staff – particularly GPs, nurses, health care assistants and receptionists – to ensure that pregnant women are made aware of the risks of whooping cough and encouraged to take up vaccination.**

**It is recommended that practices take any opportunity to notify pregnant women of the vaccination programme and invite uptake, particularly among those who may not have English as a first language.**

**During the winter flu season, pregnant women should also receive the flu vaccination which can be given at the same time as whooping cough vaccine.**

To help with the monitoring of coverage, it is important that the correct READ codes are used to record when a whooping cough (pertussis) vaccination is provided:

<b>Pertussis Read codes</b>	<b>READ v2</b>	<b>Read CTV3</b>
Pertussis vaccination in pregnancy <sup>17</sup>	6556	XacJ3
Pertussis vaccination in pregnancy declined	8IEc	Xaa6Y
Pertussis vaccination in pregnancy given by another health care provider	65560	XacJ4

Please ensure staff across the practice are made aware of the increasing risk of whooping cough and we thank you for every effort to increase the uptake of the highly effective vaccine.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Yates', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Dr. Julie Yates**  
**Screening & Immunisation Lead**  
**Public Health England**