



28 November 2024

DECLARATION OF PERTUSSIS/WHOOPING COUGH OUTBREAK IN SAMOA

The Ministry of Health wishes to inform the public of a confirmed outbreak of pertussis (commonly known as whooping cough) in Samoa. This announcement follows a significant increase of reported cases presented in the main hospital at Moto'otua.

According to the Samoa Health Ordinance 1959 and the Samoa National Communicable Disease Surveillance and Control Guidelines 2020, the confirmation of one or more cases of pertussis/whooping cough may warrant the declaration of an outbreak due to its infectious nature and potential public health impact.

A total of six (6) confirmed Pertussis cases have been reported to the Ministry of Health including the one (1) confirmed case that was publicized on the MOH Press Release issued last week Friday, 22 November 2024. These confirmed cases fall within an age range of 3 weeks to 40 years, with a majority being less than 1 year. We are waiting on additional suspected cases sent overseas for confirmation.

Pertussis is a highly transmissible and contagious respiratory illness caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*. It spreads easily from person to person, especially in overcrowded places. When an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, tiny droplets containing the bacteria are released into the air. These can be inhaled by others nearby. Direct exposure to respiratory secretions such as sharing utensils can also spread the infection. Pertussis/whooping cough is characterized by severe coughing fits, which lead to difficulty breathing, vomiting, and exhaustion.

The general public is hereby advised to watch out for symptoms such as severe coughing fits, often followed by a whooping or high-pitch sound, difficulty breathing, vomiting after coughing, fatigue and exhaustion. Vulnerable or the most at-risk groups are infants under the age of six months old, pregnant women and individuals with underlying health conditions.

The Ministry of Health is currently implementing measures to manage the outbreak which include increased surveillance and monitoring of reported cases, tracking the spread of the disease including following up with the families of those confirmed and their contacts; accelerating immunization for children through vaccination campaigns for pertussis and raising public awareness about prevention and symptoms.

The Ministry urges everyone to take note of the following:

1. Ensure children are up-to-date with their vaccinations, particularly the DTP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis) vaccine, which is administered at 6 weeks, 10 weeks, 14 weeks and the booster at 15 months of age.



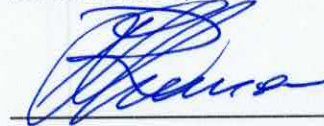
2. Maintain good hygiene practices, such as regular handwashing, wearing a face-mask, and covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
3. Avoid contact with individuals displaying symptoms of pertussis.
4. Self-isolate at home if you are sick, to prevent the further spread.

If you or a family member experiences symptoms of pertussis, please seek medical attention immediately. Early diagnosis and treatment can significantly reduce the severity of the illness.

The Ministry of Health will continue to provide the updates on the situation. We ask for the public's cooperation and vigilance to protect our communities from the spread of pertussis.

For further information or assistance, please contact the Ministry of Health at 800-6440/66506/66507 or visit the MOH website – www.health.gov.ws and Facebook Page - @healthsamoa.

Ma le fa'aaloalo,



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