

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

16 May 2019

### **Whooping cough outbreaks spark warning for older Australians to get vaccinations**

OLDER Australians are being urged to get vaccinated against whooping cough to protect themselves and other vulnerable populations in the community such as young babies, following recent whooping cough outbreaks in New South Wales and Tasmania.

Leading retail pharmacy network TerryWhite Chemmart says Australians over the age of 65, as well as young babies under the age of 12 months, were the population's most vulnerable to whooping cough, a serious respiratory illness that can cause hospitalisation and sometimes death.

In March this year, 23 cases of whooping cough were reported on the mid North Coast of New South Wales, 11 of which were reported in the Port Macquarie-Hastings area. In January, 124 cases of whooping cough were reported in Tasmania. Both outbreaks prompted official health warnings.

"There is a misconception in the community that whooping cough is a childhood disease but it can occur at any age," said TerryWhite Chemmart pharmacist Krystel Tresillian.

"Although there is an established vaccination program, regular outbreaks still occur in Australia as evidenced by the recent outbreak in Port Macquarie. Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is easily spread through the air when an infectious person coughs or sneezes and people with whooping cough can be infectious for up to three weeks without appropriate antibiotic therapy.

"Older adults who are diagnosed with whooping cough are more likely than younger adults to develop serious complications, including pneumonia, fainting and urinary incontinence. According to statistics, one in 10 diagnosed cases in older adults end up in hospital.

"People who should consider a whooping cough vaccination include those in close contact with new born babies, such as grandparents or relatives, those with existing respiratory conditions or people over the age of 65."

She said immunity waned as people aged and at least one booster vaccination was recommended for people who hadn't been vaccinated against whooping cough in the past 10 years.

Just like the flu shot, trained and qualified pharmacists at TerryWhite Chemmart can administer a whooping cough vaccination\* in-store, without a prescription. The vaccination service is completed within minutes in a private consultation space, followed by a short period of observation.

"Reported cases of whooping cough generally increase at the end of winter from July onwards, so now is the perfect time to get vaccinated," Ms Tresillian said.

People can book an appointment online at <https://bookings.terrywhitechemmart.com.au/clients/directory/> or at their local TerryWhite Chemmart at a date and time that is suitable to them. Walk-ins and weekend appointments are also available in some pharmacies, so check with your local TerryWhite Chemmart.

Whooping cough is a bacterial infection of the respiratory system, caused by *Bordetella pertussis*. Pertussis begins with symptoms similar to a cold, including a runny nose and a cough. The cough persists, often for several weeks, and becomes increasingly worse often resulting in severe bouts (paroxysms) of coughing followed by vomiting (post-tussive vomiting), or a gasping inspiratory breath which causes a "whoop" sound. The cough is usually worse at night time.

*\*TerryWhite Chemmart pharmacists can perform whooping cough vaccinations for customers aged over 18 years older in QLD and ACT and customers aged over 16 years old in SA, NSW, NT and VIC. For customers in WA and Tasmania, please speak to your doctor. Service fees apply.*

ENDS

**For interview opportunities with TerryWhite Chemmart pharmacist Krystel Tresillian or a local pharmacist in your area, please call:**

Olivia Mastry

Samantha Townsend

Phillips Group

T: (07) 3230 5000

E: [omastry@phillipsgroup.com.au](mailto:omastry@phillipsgroup.com.au)

#### **About TerryWhite Chemmart**

TerryWhite Chemmart is one of Australia's leading retail pharmacy networks delivering frontline healthcare. With more than 450 community pharmacies across Australia, we are committed to ensuring every Australian has easier access to pharmacists and expert health advice every day. TerryWhite Chemmart provides high-quality, accessible and cost-effective community based health care services and programs.