

Pertussis PCR Testing guidelines: January 2025

Based on Health New Zealand advice for prioritisation of testing in periods of high pertussis activity, PCR is only recommended for patients who meet the clinical criteria below.

1. They have an illness that is clinically compatible with pertussis
AND
2. It is within 3 weeks of cough onset
AND
3. Any one of the following applies to the person:
 - they are aged under 5 years
 - they are pregnant and in the third trimester
 - they have a chronic respiratory condition and/or are immunocompromised
 - they have been admitted to hospital
 - they live, work, or routinely spend time with a child/children aged under 12 months, pregnant people, or other people at risk of severe outcomes
 - there has been a specific request from the Medical Officer of Health to test

Patients who fall outside of these criteria, but for whom laboratory confirmation is still thought to be clinically justified, should be discussed with the on-call clinical microbiologist in the first instance.

Symptomatic contacts of laboratory confirmed cases fulfil the case definition of pertussis (via an epidemiological link) and should NOT have a test done unless requested by public health.

Requests that do not clearly state a patient meets the above clinical criteria will be rejected.



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