Protect Babies from Whooping Cough (Pertussis)

Whooping cough is very contagious and most severe for babies. People with whooping cough usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the bacteria that cause the disease. Many babies who get whooping cough are infected by parents, older siblings, or other caregivers who might not even know they have the disease.

When babies catch whooping cough, the symptoms can be very serious. Young babies could get pneumonia (lung infection), and many have trouble breathing. About half of babies younger than 1 year of age who get whooping cough end up in the hospital, and a few even die from the disease.

Because the disease can make babies so sick, and they can catch it from anyone around them, they need protection. These are the three important ways you can help protect them with vaccines:

- If you are pregnant, get vaccinated in your third trimester.
- Surround your baby with vaccinated family members and caregivers.
- Make sure your baby gets all doses of his whooping cough vaccine according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Recommend Schedule.

**SURROUND YOUR BABY WITH VACCINATED FAMILY MEMBERS AND CAREGIVERS.**

**Pregnant Women Need Whooping Cough Vaccine**

If you are pregnant, talk with your doctor about getting the whooping cough shot called Tdap, to protect yourself and your baby. CDC recommends you get your Tdap vaccine between the 27th and 36th week of each pregnancy. After you get the shot, your body will create protective antibodies (proteins produced by the body to fight off diseases) and pass some of them to your baby before birth. These antibodies provide your baby some short-term protection against whooping cough in early life. These antibodies can also protect your baby from some of the more serious complications that come along with whooping cough, such as pneumonia and encephalopathy (disease of the brain).

Vaccination during pregnancy is ideal. However, if you never received the Tdap vaccine, it is recommended you get vaccinated after delivery.

Content from CDC website at www.cdc.gov/Features/Pertussis/
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www.nj.gov/health/cd/pertussis
**Understanding Pertussis Vaccines: DTaP and Tdap**

There are two vaccines used in the United States to help prevent pertussis: DTaP and Tdap. Both also provide protection against tetanus and diphtheria. Children younger than 7 years old get DTaP, while older children and adults get Tdap.

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**Everyone Around Your Baby Needs a Whooping Cough Vaccine**

Anyone who comes in close contact with your baby, from older siblings and cousins to grandparents and caregivers, should be up-to-date with whooping cough vaccination. CDC recommends only one dose of Tdap for most people 11 years and older. Currently, the only group that CDC recommends get more than one dose of this vaccine is pregnant women, who should get the vaccine each time they are pregnant.

The recommended time to get Tdap is at 11 or 12 years of age. Teens who didn't get Tdap as a preteen should get one dose the next time they visit their doctor. CDC recommends that all adults 19 years of age and older who didn't get Tdap as a preteen or teen should also get one dose of Tdap.

If you aren’t up-to-date with Tdap vaccine, getting vaccinated at least two weeks before coming into close contact with a baby is especially important. These two weeks give your body enough time to build up protection against whooping cough. You can get Tdap no matter when you got your last tetanus shot.

Some people should not receive a Tdap vaccine. Talk to your health care provider:

- If you ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of Tdap, or if you have a severe allergy to any part of this vaccine.
- If you had a coma, or long or multiple seizures within 7 days after a childhood dose of a pertussis-containing vaccine, unless a cause other than the vaccine was found.

**Keep Your Baby’s Whooping Cough Vaccine Current**

Getting the whooping cough vaccine during pregnancy provides your baby some short-term protection, but he needs his own vaccine (called DTaP) to protect him as he grows up. For best protection against whooping cough, children need five doses of DTaP. The first dose is recommended when your baby is 2 months old. He will need 2 more doses after that, given at 4 months and 6 months, to build up high levels of protection. Vaccine protection for whooping cough decreases over time, so booster shots are recommended at 15 through 18 months and at 4 through 6 years to maintain that protection.

**Know the Signs of Whooping Cough**

Whooping cough disease starts like the common cold, with a runny nose or congestion, sneezing, and maybe a mild cough or fever. But after 1–2 weeks, severe coughing can begin. Unlike the common cold, whooping cough can become a series of coughing fits that continues for weeks. Whooping cough can cause violent and rapid coughing, over and over, until the air is gone from the lungs and you are forced to inhale with a loud “whooping” sound. In babies, the cough can be minimal or not even there. They may instead have life-threatening pauses in breathing (apnea). When you or your child develops a cold that includes a prolonged (lengthy) or severe cough, it may be whooping cough. The best way to know is to contact your doctor.

Content from CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/Features/Pertussis/](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Pertussis/)

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