

Protect infants against pertussis

Cocooning through Tdap vaccination

The CDC's Recommendations to Protect Newborns from Pertussis

- Expecting Mothers
 - Pregnant women should receive a Tdap vaccine with every pregnancy, ideally between 27 and 36 weeks gestation, no matter how long it's been since her last Td or Tdap vaccine. Antibodies are expected to pass to the baby and provide protection as soon as the mother gives birth.
 - If mothers do not receive a Tdap vaccine during pregnancy, and they have never been vaccinated, they should get vaccinated immediately after the baby is born. This may not protect the baby directly, but it may prevent the mother from becoming infected and passing pertussis to her baby.
- All adults and adolescents at least 11 years old who have not previously received a Tdap vaccination, should be vaccinated at least 2 weeks before coming into close contact with a newborn. This includes, for example, fathers, siblings, grandparents, caregivers, and healthcare professionals. Creating a circle of protection around the baby is called "cocooning."
- Everyone 11 years and older should receive one dose of Tdap, regardless of contact with infants.



The Explanation for the Recommendations

- Infants less than 12 months old, especially infants less than 3 months old, are most likely to die from a pertussis infection. Infants younger than 6 weeks old should not receive the pertussis vaccine. Infants are vaccinated at 2, 4, and 6 months of age, but are not well protected until the series is complete. A booster is recommended around 15 months and at the age of 4.
- If a woman is vaccinated during pregnancy, she will likely not spread pertussis to her newborn child. Giving Tdap to the mother between 27 and 36 weeks gestation makes it so antibodies pass to the baby. Studies have shown that maternal vaccination likely protects infants from being infected or, at least, having severe pertussis.
 - 4 out of 5 infants who contracted pertussis in the U.S. in recent years got it from someone who lived with them (when a source was identified).
 - The body's immune response peaks 2 weeks after Tdap is administered. If a mother is vaccinated after the baby is born, there are still 2 weeks after birth when the mother and infant are susceptible to infection. So, although it's better for an expecting a mother to get vaccinated during pregnancy, getting it after the baby is born will still provide some protection.

The Safety of Tdap During Pregnancy & Breastfeeding

- Regarding Tdap vaccination during pregnancy, the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices found that:
 - Tetanus vaccines have been safely given to pregnant women since the 1960s.
 - There are not more or unusual side effects in pregnant women.
 - There is no harm to the fetus.
- Getting Tdap during pregnancy provides early immunity. Providing this early immunity may mean that the infant's immune response to DTaP vaccine at 2 months of age

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is not as strong. But we don't know if that would mean they were less protected against pertussis. The benefits of vaccinating during pregnancy and protecting a newborn outweigh the potential risk of a lessened response to DTaP vaccine.

- Tdap vaccine can safely be given to breastfeeding mothers.

What can you say to expecting parents?

- I strongly recommend Tdap vaccine for all pregnant women with each pregnancy, even if your pregnancies are only a year or two apart. It is the best way to protect your infant from pertussis and it is safe for you and the baby.
- I also recommend that adolescents and adults in close contact with the baby make sure they have received a dose of Tdap, too. This will protect them and create a “cocoon” of protection around the baby.
- Babies can receive their first dose of pertussis vaccine at 2 months, but they are at risk for serious complications from pertussis before that age. Most infants are not completely protected until they have had 3 doses (at 2, 4, and 6 months of age).
- Many adults do not even know they have pertussis when they expose a baby. The illness is usually less severe in adolescents and adults. Protecting the baby by vaccinating everyone around the child is called “cocooning.”

If you vaccinate adults in the office, offer to vaccinate pregnant women and close family contacts. If you do not offer vaccine in your office, consider partnering with those who do (e.g., primary care offices, local health department).

For more information

- Recommendations: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6041a4.htm>
- Information for providers: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pertussis/tdap-pregnancy-hcp.htm>

Created by representatives from the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Physician Assistants, Immunization Action Coalition, and Maxim Health Systems. Program supported in part by Sanofi Pasteur.



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