

# FAQs about the Whooping Cough Vaccine

The Whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine is the best protection you can provide your baby against whooping cough. This vaccine protects against three infections, Tetanus, Diphtheria and Acellular Pertussis, also known as “Tdap.”

## What is whooping cough (pertussis)?

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a highly contagious bacterial infection that can cause severe coughing and trouble breathing. It can be life-threatening in newborns and young babies.

## How can I protect my baby from whooping cough?

The best way to protect your baby from whooping cough is to get vaccinated with each and every pregnancy. When the adult whooping cough vaccine (Tdap) is given in pregnancy, the mother creates antibodies against whooping cough, which cross the placenta and help protect the newborn. The amount of antibodies against whooping cough decreases quickly in adults, which is why women should be vaccinated during every pregnancy, and not before pregnancy. Tdap is preferred at 27-36 weeks to pass along high levels of antibodies to your baby. The vaccine is more effective if given earlier in this time period. When you get a whooping cough vaccine during your pregnancy, you will have antibodies in your breast milk, if you breastfeed, that you can share with your baby as soon as your milk comes in. However, if you wait to get a whooping cough vaccine until after delivering your baby, it will take 2 weeks for your body to create protective antibodies and pass them to your baby through your breast milk. Your baby should have his or her first children’s whooping cough vaccine (DTaP for children) at 2 months of age.

Experts have carefully reviewed Tdap safety data and have found that it is safe for pregnant women and their unborn babies. The chance of serious harm or severe side effects from the whooping cough vaccine is less than the complications

## Be a SUPERMOM

*Getting vaccinated against whooping cough during pregnancy is the best protection for your baby from this life-threatening disease.*

from being infected with whooping cough. There is no evidence that a woman will become hypersensitive to the tetanus vaccine if she is vaccinated often in closely-spaced pregnancies.

## How common is whooping cough in the United States?

In recent years the number of whooping cough cases in the United States has risen dramatically. In the latest peak year of 2012, 48,277 cases were reported, which is a marked increase from the low of 1000 cases reported in the 1970s. Most deaths in those who get whooping cough are in newborns. That is why getting the vaccine during pregnancy is so important.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

American College of Nurse-Midwives  
<http://ourmomentoftruth.com/your-health/importance-of-vaccines/>  
[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/rec-vac/pregnant.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/rec-vac/pregnant.html)  
[www.cdc.gov/pertussis/pregnant](http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/pregnant)  
[www.soundsofpertussis.com](http://www.soundsofpertussis.com)

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