



## Pertussis Immunization for New Parents

### What is pertussis?

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a serious illness. It begins with a runny nose, sneezing, slight fever and mild cough. As it continues, the patient develops severe coughing, thick mucous, vomiting due to the coughing and exhaustion. The severe coughing can last up to five weeks. The illness may last for twelve weeks before the patient has completely recovered.

People with pertussis are most infectious to others during the first weeks of the illness. This is often before they know that it is more than just a "common" cough or cold. If a baby is exposed to pertussis before getting pertussis shots, the baby can become **very** sick.

### How common is pertussis?

This illness is common in high schools. Until 2005, children received the last pertussis immunizations at about five years of age. Over time, the protection wore off. Teenagers with pertussis went to school not knowing that they had a serious infection. They then spread it to classmates, teachers and family members.

### What can be done?

- Children should receive DTaP (a vaccine for diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) at 2, 4, 6 and 12-18 months and 5-6 years of age.
- Teens should receive Tdap (a vaccine for diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) at 11-12 years of age.
- People who have close contact with infants less than 12 months of age (parents, grandparents less than 65 years of age, childcare providers and health care workers) should receive a Tdap shot if it has been at least two years since their last Td (tetanus) shot.

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## What should I do now?

- **Pregnant women and new mothers**

Women should not receive Tdap vaccine while they are pregnant. New mothers should receive a Tdap shot shortly after their baby is born. (It should be at least two years since the mother's last Td (tetanus) shot.) The vaccine can be given in the hospital or in the clinic soon after the baby is born.

- **Fathers and teenage or adult family members who will have close contact with the baby.**

A Tdap shot **before the baby's birth** is very important for fathers! It is best to have the Tdap shot at least two weeks before the birth of the baby. If it has been at least two years since the last Td (tetanus) shot, the father or other family members should contact their health care provider to get a Tdap shot.

- **Child care providers**

Ask any people who care for your baby if they have received a Tdap immunization. If they have not, give them a copy of this information and ask them to contact their health care provider.