

Protecting your newborn from whooping cough

Questions and Answers

What is Whooping Cough?

Whooping cough (also known as pertussis) is a highly infectious bacterial disease that causes severe bouts of coughing that can last for months. Most severe disease and deaths occur in infants younger than 6 months.

Is my baby at risk from Whooping Cough?

Babies cannot be immunised against whooping cough until they are six weeks old. They are not considered protected against this disease until they have completed the primary three doses recommended in the National Immunisation Program.

When should I be vaccinated?

Vaccination at 28 weeks (third trimester) is the recommended time to receive the whooping cough vaccination. This is the best start to protecting your baby. The vaccine can be given from 28 weeks pregnant up until delivery.

What diseases will the vaccine protect me against?

The Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis vaccine (dTpa) not only protects against whooping cough, but also provides protection against tetanus and diphtheria.

I recently received a tetanus shot, should I still have the pertussis vaccine?

Yes, to ensure your baby is protected against whooping cough, it is important to receive the vaccine from 28 weeks of pregnancy. If you have received a tetanus and diphtheria containing vaccine recently you may develop some redness, swelling and soreness at the injection site however the benefits of protection against whooping cough are likely to outweigh the risk of minor reactions.

Does my baby still need the vaccination at 6 weeks?

Yes. Your baby will still need the whooping cough vaccine at 6 weeks. Maintaining the National Immunisation Schedule is still the best way to protect your child.

What are the benefits for my baby when I receive the vaccination at 28 weeks?

Receiving the vaccination at 28 weeks gives your body time to produce antibodies that will pass to your baby before birth. These antibodies will help protect your baby until they receive their own vaccination.

Is the vaccination safe?

Yes, vaccination is safe for the mother and baby if given during pregnancy. Studies have found no evidence of an increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes (such as stillbirth, pre-eclampsia, foetal distress, low birth weight or neonatal renal failure). Severe reactions for the mother following vaccination are rare. Minor reactions to the vaccine may include localised pain, redness and swelling at injection site, and fever.

What other vaccinations are recommended during pregnancy?

Influenza (Flu) vaccination is also recommended during pregnancy. It is safe and provides protection for the mother and baby.

Can I receive the whooping cough and flu vaccines at the same time?

Yes, you can receive both vaccinations at the same time or at different appointments. For greatest protection against flu it is recommended that pregnant women receive the flu vaccination as early as possible in pregnancy. This will also depend the time of year and vaccine availability.

The whooping cough vaccination for pregnant women is recommended at 28 weeks gestation or as soon as possible after to provide protection for your baby.

Is there any reason I should not get the whooping cough vaccination?

Speak to your immunisation provider about any allergies you may have. If you are allergic to any component of the vaccine you should not receive the vaccination.

Where can I get vaccinated?

The vaccines will be available through the antenatal clinics at Calvary Hospital and the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children as well as GPs. General Practices may charge a consultation fee.

Who should I discuss whether to get the vaccine with?

You should discuss whether to get the vaccine with your maternity care provider, GP or by phoning the ACT immunisation information line on 62052300.

Where can I get more information?

You can get further information from your maternity care provider, your GP or by phoning the ACT immunisation information line on 62052300. Information is also available on the Immunise Australia website www.immunise.health.gov.au or ACT Health website <http://health.act.gov.au/our-services/immunisation>.