Questions and Answers

**Why the change?**
On 27 March 2015 the Australian Immunisation Handbook was amended to recommend pertussis vaccination for pregnant women in their third trimester.

Vaccination of pregnant women with pertussis vaccine has been shown to be effective in preventing pertussis disease in newborn infants via the transfer of maternal antibodies in utero. Vaccination of mothers at least 7 days before delivery reduced pertussis disease by 91% in infants <3 months of age. The highest risk of infection and severe disease in infants of unvaccinated mothers is before they have received the primary course of vaccinations.

**When should the vaccination be administrated?**
The vaccine can be administered anytime in the third trimester up until delivery. It is however recommended that the vaccine be given at 28 weeks gestation or as soon as possible afterward.

**Which vaccines are being used?**
Boostrix® and Adacel®. Both are combination vaccines dTpa (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis).

**My patient was recently vaccinated for tetanus, should she still receive the pertussis vaccine?**
To ensure protection of her baby, it is important for the mother to receive the vaccine from 28 weeks. While dTpa vaccine is generally safe and well-tolerated in adults, there is a small risk that significant injection site reactions following subsequent doses might occur in some women. Where a tetanus and diphtheria containing vaccine has been given recently, the benefits of protection against pertussis gained from using dTpa, where recommended, are likely to outweigh the risk of an adverse event.

**Should we also offer the flu vaccination?**
Yes, you should offer both vaccinations if available at the same time or at different appointments. However 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 pertussis vaccine should be administered at 28 weeks gestation or as soon as possible prior to delivery to ensure protection for the unborn baby.
Will we receive more pertussis containing vaccines after the initial delivery?
After the initial delivery you will be required to order more vaccines using the standard vaccine order form provided by the Vaccine Management Unit.

Vaccine order forms can be downloaded from the ACT Health website: http://www.health.act.gov.au/our-services/immunisation/forms-and-information or by contacting the Vaccine Management Unit, Health Protection Service on 62052300 or email immunisation@act.gov.au

Do I need to keep records of the pertussis vaccinations administered?
Yes, as with other vaccination programs you need to provide data to ACT Health. An Antenatal Pertussis Vaccination Program data collection form has been included in this package. The form should be completed and returned to ACT Health via fax: 62051738 or scanned and emailed to immunisation@act.gov.au. Further copies of the form can be downloaded from http://www.health.act.gov.au/our-services/immunisation/forms-and-information

Should I fill out an Antenatal Vaccination Card for all women?
Yes, please provide the mother with the completed record once she has been vaccinated. Please also ensure the vaccination has been recorded on the patient’s antenatal card under the heading ‘vaccinations’.

More information?

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