

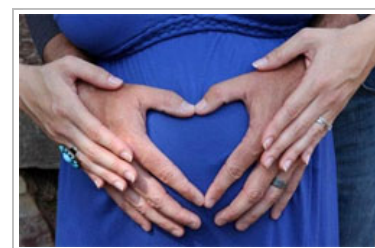


Pregnancy and Whooping Cough

[Pregnancy and Whooping Cough Home](#)

Get the Whooping Cough Vaccine During Each Pregnancy

Only you can give your baby protection against whooping cough (pertussis) before your little one is even born. Talk to your doctor or midwife about getting the whooping cough vaccine (called Tdap) during your third trimester.



Whooping cough is a serious disease that can be deadly for babies. Unfortunately, babies do not start building their own protection against whooping cough until they get vaccinated at two months old. This leaves babies unprotected in the first months of life when they are at highest risk of getting very sick if they get whooping cough.

Protect your baby before she is able to get vaccinated by getting a Tdap vaccine during the third trimester of your pregnancy. By doing so, you pass high levels of antibodies to your baby before birth. These antibodies help protect your baby against whooping cough in those first months of life.

CDC recommends all women receive a Tdap vaccine during the 27th through 36th week of *each* pregnancy, preferably during the earlier part of this time period. The following medical associations dedicated to the health of pregnant women or children support this recommendation:

- [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#)
- [American College of Nurse-Midwives](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [American Academy of Family Physicians](#)

Getting a Tdap vaccine during pregnancy passes protection to your baby

After receiving a Tdap vaccine, your body creates protective antibodies and passes some of them to your baby before birth. These antibodies provide your baby some short-term protection against whooping cough in early life. These antibodies can also protect your baby from some of the more serious complications, including hospitalization, that come along with getting whooping cough.

Protective antibodies are at their highest about 2 weeks after getting the vaccine, but it takes time to pass them to your baby. So the preferred time to get a Tdap vaccine is early in your third trimester.

The recommended time to get the shot is during your 27th through 36th week of pregnancy, preferably during the earlier part of this time period.

The amount of whooping cough antibodies in your body decreases over time. That is why CDC recommends you get a Tdap vaccine during *each* pregnancy, even if your pregnancies are only a year or two apart. Doing so allows each of your babies to get the greatest number of protective antibodies and best protection possible.

Vaccination during pregnancy offers the best protection

When women get a Tdap vaccine while pregnant, their babies have better protection against whooping cough than babies whose mothers did not get vaccinated during pregnancy. Getting a Tdap vaccine between 27 through 36 weeks of pregnancy lowers the risk of whooping cough in babies younger than 2 months old by 78%¹.

If you did not get a Tdap vaccine during pregnancy and have never received it before, you can get it after your baby is born. It will take about 2 weeks before your body develops protection (antibodies) in response to the vaccine. Once you have protection from the vaccine, you are less likely to give whooping cough to your newborn while caring for him. But remember, your baby will still be at risk for [catching whooping cough from others](#).

Safe for you, your baby

A Tdap vaccine is very safe for pregnant women and their babies. You cannot get whooping cough from a Tdap vaccine. Getting the vaccine during pregnancy will not increase your risk for pregnancy complications. Learn more about [safety and side effects](#).

Blood tests cannot tell if you need a Tdap vaccine

Experts do not know what level of whooping cough antibodies is needed to protect anyone, including babies, from getting sick. That is why CDC recommends all women get a Tdap vaccine during each pregnancy — even women with some antibodies due to a previous infection or vaccine. The goal is to give each baby the greatest number of protective antibodies possible.

Breastfeeding may pass some protective antibodies onto your baby

You can pass some whooping cough antibodies to your baby by breastfeeding. By getting a Tdap vaccine during your pregnancy, you will have these antibodies in your breast milk as soon as your milk comes in. However, your baby will not get protective antibodies immediately if you wait until your baby is born to get the vaccine. This is because it takes about 2 weeks for your body to create antibodies. Learn more about the [health benefits of breastfeeding](#).

Footnote

¹ Skoff TH, Blain AE, Watt J, et al. [Impact of the US maternal tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis vaccination program on preventing pertussis in infants <2 months of age: A case-control evaluation](#)External [↗](#). *Clin Infect Dis*. 2017;65(12):1977–83.

Learn why Laura decided to get the whooping cough vaccine in her 3rd trimester of pregnancy and how her baby girl was born with some protection against the disease.

[Also available on YouTube.](#)

Related Pages

Information about whooping cough [in English](#) and [en Español](#)

[Hear what whooping cough sounds like](#)

Page last reviewed: June 10, 2021

Content source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, Division of Bacterial Diseases](#)