

## What is Pertussis?

Pertussis, aka whooping cough, is a transmissible respiratory infection caused by the *Bordetella pertussis* bacterium. Infants who have not started or completed their routine immunizations are at the greatest risk for severe disease and death.

## Is Pertussis an issue in Canada?

After the acellular pertussis vaccine was introduced in Canada in 1997/1998, there was a steady decline in the number of pertussis cases until 2011. However, between 2012 and 2015 numerous outbreaks occurred across Canada. Seventy-percent of admissions to hospital for pertussis occurred in infants younger than four months of age, and almost all deaths from pertussis (14 out of 15 between 2006 and 2015) happened among infants younger than two months of age, before the infants received their first vaccines.

## Why should the Tdap vaccine be offered to pregnant women?

Tdap vaccination in pregnancy provides protection to infants until they are able to receive the pertussis vaccine (DTaP) at two months of age. Studies have shown that nine out of 10 infants under three months of age are protected following maternal vaccination against pertussis during pregnancy

## Is the Tdap vaccine safe during pregnancy?

The vaccine is safe for the mother and the fetus. The most common side effects after receiving a pertussis-containing vaccine are injection site reactions (redness, swelling or pain). Other less common symptoms may include fever, chills and headache.

## Who should be vaccinated?

All pregnant women should receive the Tdap vaccine in every pregnancy, irrespective of prior immunization history.

## When should pregnant women receive the Tdap vaccine?

NACI recommends vaccination should ideally be provided between 27 and 32 weeks of gestational age. Tdap can be given as early as 13 weeks based on the level of risk (ex. pregnancies with an increased risk of preterm delivery). Tdap can also be administered beyond 32 weeks gestation as it is proven to provide partial protection

## Who should NOT receive the vaccine?

The vaccine should not be administered to anyone with a history of anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of pertussis-containing vaccine or to any of its components.

## Can the flu shot and the Tdap vaccine be given together?

Yes. Since both vaccines are made of inactivated agents, they can be administered either at the same time or in different visits, and no minimum time interval is needed between administering either of these vaccines.

## Can the Tdap vaccine be given to breastfeeding patients?

Yes. The vaccine can be given to women who are breastfeeding and some protection can be passed to the infant. However, waiting to get the vaccine until after baby is born is not ideal because it takes four weeks after vaccination to reach peak anti-pertussis antibody levels. If the vaccine is given during pregnancy, nursing mothers will have protective antibodies in their breast milk that can be passed on to the infant as soon as the mother's milk comes in.