

# PERTUSSIS VACCINATION DURING PREGNANCY

## Frequently asked questions

### What is Pertussis?

Pertussis is commonly known as whooping cough. In babies, whooping cough can be severe, especially in those infants who have not started or completed their routine immunizations.

### Is Pertussis an issue in Canada?

There have been several outbreaks of whooping cough across Canada in the last several years. Seventy-percent of admissions to hospital for pertussis occurred in infants younger than four months of age. While deaths from pertussis are rare, most occur among infants younger than two months of age, before the infants received their first vaccines.

### What is Tdap vaccine?

Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis) vaccine is the standard vaccine given as a booster in grade nine and in adults.

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

After vaccination, pregnant women will develop antibodies to pertussis, which help them fight off infection if they come into contact with the disease. These antibodies will pass to the baby through the placenta and provide the baby with the same protection. These antibodies will last for several months after the baby is born, until they can be vaccinated themselves.

### Who should be vaccinated?

All pregnant women should receive the Tdap vaccine in every pregnancy.

### When should pregnant women receive the Tdap vaccine?

For most women, the ideal time to get the Tdap vaccine is between 27 and 32 weeks of pregnancy (7-8 months). Certain people might need to receive it outside of this period. Your physician, midwife, or public health nurse will discuss this with you if this is the case.

### Is the Tdap vaccine safe during pregnancy?

The vaccine is safe for the mother and the baby. The most common side effects of the vaccine are redness, swelling and/or pain at the injection site. Other less common symptoms may include fever, chills and headache.

### Who should NOT receive the vaccine?

If you have had an allergic reaction to a pertussis-containing vaccine (or any of its components) in the past, you should not get the vaccine.

**For additional information and services, please contact your Regional Health Authority**