

Get the Whooping Cough Vaccine While You are Pregnant

It is important for women to get the whooping cough vaccine in the third trimester of every pregnancy. Vaccines are the best way to prevent this disease. There are 2 different whooping cough vaccines. Both vaccines combine protection against whooping cough, tetanus and diphtheria, but they are for different age groups:

- Tdap: for everyone 11 years and older, including pregnant women
- DTaP: for children 2 months through 6 years of age

You need the whooping cough vaccine during each of your pregnancies

The best time to get the shot is your 27th through 36th week of pregnancy.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommends that pregnant women receive the whooping cough vaccine for adolescents and adults (called Tdap vaccine) during the third trimester of each pregnancy. This replaces the original recommendation that pregnant women get the vaccine only if they had not previously received it.

This recommendation is supported by the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists \(http://www.acog.org/ResourcesAndPublications/CommitteeOpinions/CommitteeonObstetricPractice/UpdateonImmunizationandPregnancyTetanusDiphtheriaandPertussisVaccination\)](http://www.acog.org/ResourcesAndPublications/CommitteeOpinions/CommitteeonObstetricPractice/UpdateonImmunizationandPregnancyTetanusDiphtheriaandPertussisVaccination) and the [American College of Nurse-Midwives \(http://www.midwife.org/imdex.asp\)](http://www.midwife.org/imdex.asp).

You should get the whooping cough vaccine while pregnant to pass protection to you baby

Early, short-term protection is critical. Your baby will not get their first whooping cough vaccine until they are 2 months old.

After receiving the whooping cough vaccine, your body will create protective antibodies (proteins produced to fight off diseases) and pass 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 that come along with whooping cough.

Your protective antibodies are at their highest about 2 weeks after getting the vaccine. So you should get the vaccine late in your pregnancy, preferably during your 27th through 36th week, to give your baby the most protection when she is born.

The amount of whooping cough antibodies in your body decreases over time. When you get the vaccine during one pregnancy, your antibody levels will not stay high enough to provide enough protection for future pregnancies. It is important for you to get a whooping cough vaccine during each pregnancy so that each of your babies gets the greatest number of protective antibodies from you and the best protection possible against this disease.

Getting the whooping cough vaccine while pregnant is better than getting the vaccine after you give birth

Whooping cough vaccination during pregnancy is ideal so your baby will have short-term protection as soon as he is born. This early protection is important because your baby will not start getting his whooping cough vaccines until he is 2 months old. These first few months of life are when your baby is at greatest risk for catching whooping cough and having severe, potentially life-threatening complications from the infection. To avoid that gap in protection, it is best to get a whooping cough vaccine during pregnancy so you pass protection to your baby before he is born. To continue protecting your baby, he should get whooping cough vaccines starting at 2 months old.

About 30% to 40% of babies who get whooping cough catch it from their mother.*

* When source was identified

However, if you have never been vaccinated with Tdap vaccine and you do not get vaccinated during pregnancy, be sure to get the vaccine immediately after you give birth, before leaving the hospital or birthing center. 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.

Public health professionals expect that having mothers get the whooping cough vaccine during pregnancy will prevent more babies from ending up in the hospital and dying from whooping cough than if mothers get the vaccine after delivery.