

Tdap and Pregnancy

What is Tdap and is it safe during pregnancy?

Tdap is a vaccine to prevent diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough). This vaccine is sometimes referred to as the whooping cough vaccine. It is recommended for all pregnant women during each pregnancy after 26 weeks, regardless of previous Tdap immunization history and interval between pregnancies.

The vaccine is very safe for you and your baby. You can get the vaccine from your family physician or the health unit. It is given as a single injection in your upper arm muscle. The most common side effects are mild irritation, such as redness, swelling or pain at injection site. This should go away within a few days. You cannot get whooping cough from the diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine. The vaccine does not contain any live bacteria.

Why do I need to get a whooping cough vaccine while I am pregnant?

The whooping cough vaccine is recommended during your third trimester so your body can create antibodies and pass them to your baby before birth. These antibodies will help protect your newborn right after birth and until your baby gets their own first whooping cough vaccine at two months of age. During the first few months of life, your baby is most vulnerable to serious complications from this disease.

Is it safe to breastfeed after getting the whooping cough vaccine?

Yes, in fact you can pass some whooping cough protection to your baby by breastfeeding. When you get a whooping cough vaccine during your pregnancy, you will have protective antibodies in your breast milk that you can share with your baby as soon as your milk comes in. However, your baby will not get protective antibodies immediately if you wait to get a whooping cough vaccine until after you give birth. This is because it takes about two weeks after getting vaccinated before your body develops antibodies.

How dangerous is whooping cough for babies?

Whooping cough is very serious for babies. Many babies with whooping cough don't cough at all. Instead it can cause them to stop breathing. About half of babies younger than one year old who get whooping cough are hospitalized. Most whooping cough deaths are among babies who are too young to be protected by their own vaccination.

Should partners get a Tdap every pregnancy?

Adults 19 years old or older (who are not pregnant) should get only one dose of the whooping cough vaccine. If an adult will be around your baby and has already had Tdap vaccine, it is not recommended to receive the vaccination again.