

# GET THE PERTUSSIS (WHOOPIING COUGH) VACCINE WHILE YOU ARE PREGNANT

## What is pertussis?

Pertussis (also called whooping cough) is a very contagious respiratory infection caused by the *Bordetella pertussis* bacteria. Babies who have not been vaccinated or who have not finished their routine immunizations are at the highest risk for severe disease and death.

## Is pertussis an issue in Canada?

After the acellular pertussis vaccine was introduced in Canada between 1997 and 1998, there was a steady decline in the number of pertussis cases until 2011. However, between 2012 and 2015, numerous outbreaks occurred across Canada. In fact, 70% 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 (Adacel) 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. The vaccine can be safely given at the same time as the flu vaccine and/or the Rhogam injection.

## When should pregnant women receive the Tdap vaccine?

It is recommended that all pregnant women should receive the pertussis vaccine (Tdap) in every pregnancy, even if you are up to date on your immunizations. The best time to receive this immunization is between 21 and 32 weeks of pregnancy. Getting the vaccine during this time gives the vaccine enough time to work (it takes at least four weeks to reach peak levels). It has been shown that 9 out of 10 babies under 3 months old are protected against pertussis after mothers are vaccinated during their pregnancies.

## Is the cost of the vaccination covered by Alberta Health?

Currently, only one adult dose is covered through Public Health Adult Immunization (Sunpark Plaza: 403.943.9500). If you have already received this through Public Health as an adult, then you can obtain a prescription that can be taken to a pharmacy to have it administered. There may be a fee when received through the pharmacy. Most insurance plans cover the cost.