

Record High Cases of Whooping Cough – Vaccinate to Protect

As a parent, you know how much you do to keep your little one safe and healthy. Even if you don't have kids, you still play an important role in protecting babies – like your friend's newborn, your grandchild, or even a baby you run into at the store. These children have something in common; they are vulnerable to whooping cough (or pertussis). We can all do something to protect them by getting immunized.

Whooping cough can take a toll on anyone, but it can be deadly for young children. Today, there are cases in every state, and the country is on track to have the most reported cases since 1959. From January through September 2012, about 30,000 cases of whooping cough were reported, along with 14 deaths. Most of those deaths were among babies younger than 3 months old. How can you protect yourself and help keep babies safe?

Protection can start before a baby is even born. Pregnant moms should get a Tdap vaccine, which is a booster shot combining protection against whooping cough, tetanus, and diphtheria. She'll be protecting herself so she won't spread whooping cough to her newborn, and some protection will be passed on to her baby.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also recommends that anyone around babies get the whooping cough vaccine at least two weeks before coming into close contact with an infant. In fact, every adult is recommended one dose of Tdap to protect themselves, even if they're not going to be around babies. During pregnancy, moms should talk to others about getting the Tdap vaccine. This includes her spouse, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, babysitters and day care staff.

After the baby arrives, he'll get his first dose of DTaP (the childhood vaccine combining protection against whooping cough, tetanus, and diphtheria) at 2 months of age. He should complete the vaccine series by getting additional doses at 4 months, 6 months, 15 through 18 months, and 4 through 6 years of age. Since the protection DTaP vaccine provides young children decreases over time, preteens need the Tdap booster shot at 11 or 12 years old.

Now is the time to do your part to protect yourself – and babies, too. Visit www.cdc.gov/pertussis for more information, and talk to a doctor about the whooping cough vaccine today.