

Cocooning Protects Babies - Get Vaccinated Against Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

What is pertussis (whooping cough)?

Pertussis (whooping cough) is an infection caused by bacteria. Symptoms include the following:

- Begins with a runny nose and cough
- Soon the cough becomes “paroxysmal” with frequent severe coughing spells, often worse at night. Fever is usually absent or minimal
- A loud “whoop” is often heard when breathing in after coughing. Infants and adults who get whooping cough often don’t have the “whoop” when they cough
- Gagging, turning blue in the face or vomiting after coughing is common
- During the recovery period, the cough often continues for 6-10 weeks

What is cocooning?

- Cocooning is a way to protect babies from catching diseases, such as pertussis, from the people around them
- By ensuring pregnant mothers, parents, siblings, grandparents, friends, child-care providers and healthcare providers are vaccinated, the baby is surrounded with a cocoon of protection until he or she is old enough to be fully protected with vaccination

Why is cocooning important?

- Babies less than 6 months old are too young to have received all of the doses of vaccine that are needed to protect them against dangerous diseases
- Young infants have the highest rate of pertussis and most deaths caused by pertussis occur in infants less than 6 months of age

- Unvaccinated adults and family members, including parents and grandparents, are often the ones who unknowingly spread diseases to babies
- A number of towns and cities across Canada have had whooping cough outbreaks

How can we protect babies against whooping cough?

- Everyone has the opportunity to protect babies by being vaccinated. This includes adults who should receive a one time dose of Tdap vaccine in adulthood
- To protect newborn infants against pertussis, pregnant women (more than 26 weeks), who have not been previously vaccinated against pertussis in adulthood, should be offered one dose of Tdap
- Infants and toddlers should be vaccinated on schedule with DTaP-IPV-Hib, while 4-6 year old children should receive the Tdap-IPV vaccine, according to the Ontario schedule
- Teenagers need one dose of Tdap vaccine at 14-16 years of age



Parent Resources

- Government of Ontario. (2015, December 1). Immunization and Vaccines. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/vaccines>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015, June 24). Surround babies with protection. Retrieved from: <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/pregnant/mom/protection.html>

Healthcare Provider Resources

- National Advisory Committee on Immunization. (2015, October 2). NACI Recommendations, statements, and updates. Retrieved from: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/>
- Public Health Agency of Canada. (2014, February). Canadian immunization guide: pertussis. Retrieved from: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cig-gci/p04-pert-coqu-eng.php>

Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or contact Public Health at 519-575-4400 ext. 13007.

Accessible formats of this document are available upon request.

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