

Whooping Cough Cases are on the Rise – Be Protected?

Whooping cough is often thought of as a disease of the past, but unfortunately, it's still common in the U.S. To provide yourself and your family with the best protection, get vaccinated against the disease.

There are many factors contributing to the current resurgence of whooping cough. While offering protection, the whooping cough vaccines used now do not last as long as healthcare professionals would like. Raised awareness, along with better tests to diagnose patients, has contributed to an increase in the number of whooping cough cases being diagnosed and reported.

Whooping cough can take a toll on anyone, but it can be deadly for babies. There are between 10,000 and 50,000 whooping cough cases reported each year in the United States, with up to 20 infant deaths due to the disease. Most deaths are in babies too young to be protected by their own vaccination.

The best protection against whooping cough is the whooping cough vaccine. Babies, teens, adults, and pregnant women need to be vaccinated according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommended schedule.

For babies, protection against whooping cough can start before they're even born. During pregnancy, women should get the Tdap vaccine; a shot combining protection against whooping cough, tetanus, and diphtheria. Antibodies will be passed to the baby, providing protection until they are old enough to receive their first whooping cough vaccine, and the mother will have protection against spreading whooping cough to her newborn.

Before her baby is born, a pregnant woman should talk to others about making sure they are up-to-date with the Tdap vaccine. This includes the baby's father, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, babysitters and daycare staff. If someone is not up-to-date, he or she should get the whooping cough vaccine at least two weeks before coming in close contact with the new baby.

Babies begin their series of vaccines against whooping cough at 2 months of age with their first dose of DTaP. Like Tdap, this shot combines protection against whooping cough, tetanus, and diphtheria. The series is completed by getting additional doses at 4 months, 6 months, 15 through 18 months, and 4 through 6 years of age. Since the protection the DTaP vaccine provides young children decreases over time, preteens need the Tdap booster shot at 11 or 12 years old.

Even if you don't have children or a baby on the way, you can help protect yourself and those who are vulnerable around you by ensuring your whooping cough vaccine is up-to-date. CDC recommends that all teens and adults who have never gotten the Tdap vaccine receive a dose.

Do your part to protect yourself and your family from whooping cough. Visit www.cdc.gov/whoopingcough for more information, and talk to your doctor about the whooping cough vaccine.