

Grandparents Can Help Protect Against Whooping Cough with Tdap Vaccine

The arrival of a new grandchild is a time of great joy and pride. Will the baby look just like your son or daughter? Maybe he'll have your spouse's dimple, or develop your sense of humor.

Before you cuddle with your new, little bundle, though, it's important to get a Tdap vaccine, which protects against whooping cough (also called pertussis), tetanus and diphtheria. If you've never gotten a Tdap vaccine, you should ideally get it at least 2 weeks before visiting the baby. And the mom-to-be should also get this vaccine during her third trimester.

Whooping cough spreads easily and can cause severe illness and even death. It is especially dangerous for infants under 6 months of age, who are too young to be well protected by vaccines for whooping cough.

"Babies who get whooping cough often catch it from family members, including grandparents, who may not even know they have whooping cough," said Dr. Nancy Messonnier, Director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "That's why it's important that parents, grandparents, and other family members get a Tdap shot to prevent getting—and spreading—whooping cough."

Although most adults were vaccinated against whooping cough as children or may have had the disease as a child, protection wears off over time. Tdap is a vaccine recommended for all adults—including pregnant women — as well as teens and preteens. The shot is especially important if you're going to be around a new baby—like your grandchild.

Tdap vaccine also provides important protection for *you* from whooping cough and its serious symptoms, which can last as long as 10 weeks or more.

Of course, vaccinating the adults around infants is no substitute for childhood immunization. Infants and young children need five shots of the childhood vaccine, DTaP, for maximum protection from whooping cough. According to CDC's immunization schedule, DTaP shots are recommended at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 15 through 18 months, and 4 through 6 years old.

Do you think that whooping cough is a disease from *your* childhood and not a problem today? It's actually common in the United States, and cases usually peak every few years. In 2010, which brought large outbreaks, there were 27,550 reported cases of whooping cough. In 2012, which brought large outbreaks, there were more than 42,000 reported cases of whooping cough.

You and your new grandchild have so many special moments ahead of you. So, talk to your doctor about getting the whooping cough vaccine. That way, you can help protect yourself and your grandchild and start making happy, healthy memories together.

To learn more about whooping cough and vaccination, visit www.cdc.gov/whoopingcough, or talk with your health care professional.