

Tdap Vaccination Against Pertussis (Whooping Cough) During Pregnancy in Canada **Protecting Every Mother and Every Baby**

The Canadian National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) and The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) now recommend immunization with the Tdap vaccine (Tetanus Toxoid, Reduced Diphtheria Toxoid and Reduced Acellular Pertussis) in every pregnancy, irrespective of previous immunization history.

The SOGC recommends immunization to be provided ideally between 21 and 32 weeks of gestational age, but evidence supports vaccination as early as 13 weeks, up to the time of delivery, in certain circumstances (i.e. risk of preterm birth).

What is Pertussis?

Pertussis, aka whooping cough, is a transmissible respiratory infection caused by the *Bordetella Pertussis* bacterium. Infants who have not started or completed their routine immunizations are at the greatest risk for severe disease and death.

Is Pertussis an Issue in Canada Nowadays?

Between 2012 and 2015 numerous outbreaks occurred across Canada. Seventy-percent 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 at two months age.

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 9 out of 10 infants under three months of age are protected following maternal vaccination against pertussis during pregnancy.

Is the Tdap Vaccine Safe During Pregnancy?

The vaccination 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.

Who should be Vaccinated?

All pregnant women should receive the Tdap vaccine in every pregnancy, irrespective of prior immunization history.

Can the Tdap Vaccine be Given to Breastfeeding Patients?

Yes. The vaccination can be given to women who are breastfeeding and some protections can be passed to the infant this way. However, waiting to get the vaccine after the baby is born is not ideal because it takes four weeks after vaccination to reach peak anti-pertussis antibody levels. If the vaccine is given during pregnancy, nursing mothers will have protective antibodies in their breast milk that can be passed on to the infant as soon as the mother's milk comes in.

Can the Flu Shot and the Tdap Vaccine be Given Together?

Yes. Since both vaccines are made of inactive agents, they can be administered either at the same time or in different visits, and no minimum time interval is needed between administering either of these vaccines.

Can the Vaccine be Administered at the Same Time as the Anti-D (Rhogam) Treatment?

Yes. Since it is an inactivated vaccine, there is no risk of an interaction with anti-D treatment.

When and Where should Pregnant Women Receive the Tdap Vaccine?

The SOGC recommends immunization should be provided ideally between 21 and 32 weeks of gestational age. You can get the Tdap vaccine from your family doctor or walk-in clinic.

-Obtained from Credit Valley Obstetrics/Gynaecology Associates.

