

## Tdap Basics

### What is pertussis?

**Pertussis** (also called whooping cough) is a highly contagious disease that causes severe coughing and difficulty breathing. People with pertussis may make a “whooping” sound when they try to breathe and gasp for air.

Pertussis can affect people of all ages, and can be very serious, even deadly, for babies less than a year old. Babies younger than 3 months have the highest risk of severe disease and of dying from pertussis.

### What is Tdap?

The **tetanus toxoid, reduced diphtheria toxoid, and acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine** is used to prevent three infections:

- Tetanus
- Diphtheria
- Pertussis

### How does the Tdap shot work?

The shot helps your body make protective **antibodies** against pertussis. These antibodies are passed to your **fetus** and protect your baby until your baby begins to get vaccines against pertussis at 2 months of age.

Getting the shot early in the window of 27 to 36 weeks is best. This timing maximizes the antibodies present at birth and will provide the most protection to your newborn.

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## Tdap and Pregnancy

### I'm pregnant. Should I get a Tdap shot?

Yes. All pregnant women should get a Tdap shot between 27 and 36 weeks of pregnancy, as early in that window as possible. The Tdap shot is a safe and effective way to protect you and your baby from serious illness and complications of pertussis.

### Is it safe to get the Tdap shot during pregnancy?

Yes. The shot is safe for pregnant women.

### I got a Tdap shot during a past pregnancy. Do I need to get the shot again during this pregnancy?

Yes. All pregnant women should get a Tdap shot during each pregnancy between 27 and 36 weeks of pregnancy. Receiving the vaccine as early as possible during these weeks is best.

### I got a Tdap shot early in this pregnancy. Do I need another shot between 27 and 36 weeks?

No. A Tdap shot later in the same pregnancy is not necessary if you received the Tdap shot before the 27th week of your current pregnancy.

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## Protecting Your Newborn

### Can newborns be vaccinated against pertussis?

No. Newborns cannot start their vaccine series against pertussis until they are 2 months old. This is because the vaccine does not work in the first few weeks of life. This is one reason why newborns are at a high risk of getting pertussis and becoming very ill.

## What else can I do to protect my newborn against pertussis?

Getting your Tdap shot during pregnancy is the most important step in protecting yourself and your baby against pertussis. It is also important that all family members and caregivers are up to date with their vaccines.

Adolescent family members or caregivers should get the Tdap vaccine at age 11 to 12. If adult family members or caregivers have never had the Tdap vaccine, they should get it at least 2 weeks before having contact with your baby. This makes a safety “cocoon” of vaccinated caregivers around your baby.

## I'm breastfeeding my baby. Is it safe to get the Tdap shot?

Yes. The Tdap shot can be given safely to breastfeeding women if they did not get the Tdap shot during pregnancy and have never received the Tdap shot before. There may also be added benefit to your baby if you get the shot while breastfeeding.

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## Other Questions

### I did not get my Tdap shot during pregnancy. Do I still need to get the vaccine?

If you have never had the Tdap vaccine as an adult, and you do not get the shot during pregnancy, be sure to get the vaccine right after you give birth, before you leave the hospital or birthing center.

It will take about 2 weeks for your body to make protective antibodies in response to the vaccine. Once these antibodies are made, you are less likely to give pertussis to your baby. But remember, your newborn will still be at risk of catching pertussis from others.

If you had a Tdap shot as an adolescent or adult but did not have one during your pregnancy, you do not need to get the vaccine after giving birth.

### Can I get Tdap at the same time as other shots?

Yes. You can get Tdap, flu, and COVID-19 shots in the same visit. Getting these vaccines at the same time is safe.

### What is the difference between DTaP, Tdap, and Td?

Children receive the diphtheria and tetanus toxoids and acellular pertussis (DTaP) vaccine. Adolescents and adults are given the Tdap vaccine as a booster to the vaccines they had as children. Adults receive the tetanus and diphtheria (Td) vaccine every 10 years to protect against tetanus and diphtheria. The Td vaccine does not protect against pertussis.

## Glossary

**Antibodies:** Proteins in the blood that the body makes in reaction to foreign substances, such as bacteria and viruses.

**Diphtheria:** A bacterial infection that causes a membrane to form in the throat and block air flow. A toxin made by the bacteria also can damage the heart and nerves.

**Fetus:** The stage of human development beyond 8 completed weeks after fertilization.

**Pertussis:** A contagious respiratory infection. Also known as whooping cough.

**Tetanus:** A disease caused by bacteria that can enter the body through a puncture wound such as from a metal nail, wood splinter, or insect bite. The bacteria make a toxin that can paralyze the breathing muscles. A shot is available that protects against tetanus.

**Tetanus Toxoid, Reduced Diphtheria Toxoid, and Acellular Pertussis (Tdap) Vaccine:** A shot that protects against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough).

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If you have further questions, contact your ob-gyn.

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FAQ530

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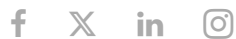
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