Tdap Vaccine for Pregnant Women

**What is Tdap?**

Tdap is a booster vaccine against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough). Protecting mothers and babies against whooping cough is a high priority because it has become increasingly common in Minnesota over the last few years and whooping cough can be life-threatening or even fatal to infants.

**What are the dangers of whooping cough for babies?**

Whooping cough can be serious for anyone, but for your newborn, it can be life-threatening. Up to 20 infants die each year from whooping cough in the United States. About half of babies younger than 1 year who get whooping cough need treatment in the hospital. The younger the baby is when they contract whooping cough the more dangerous it is.

**How does Tdap protect newborns?**

When you get vaccinated during pregnancy, your body creates antibodies to fight the disease, and those antibodies are passed to your developing baby. The antibodies will help protect your baby for a short time after they are born until they can get vaccinated themselves. Getting Tdap during pregnancy also makes it less likely that you will have whooping cough during the time when your baby is most at risk.

**How effective is Tdap in protecting infants?**

Tdap vaccine prevents most cases of whooping cough, but not every case. Studies show that infants who get whooping cough have less severe symptoms (including less likely to be hospitalized or to die) if their mother was vaccinated.

**When should I get Tdap?**

Between the 27th and 36th week of pregnancy.

**What if I’m not due for a tetanus booster?**

The recommendation for Tdap applies even if you had a tetanus booster or Tdap before becoming pregnant. You have the most whooping cough antibodies to share with your baby in the first months after you receive the vaccine.

**Can I wait and get Tdap after I deliver?**

Getting vaccinated after delivery will not allow you to pass protective antibodies to your developing baby. Vaccination during pregnancy is the best way you can protect yourself and your baby from whooping cough.
Is Tdap vaccine safe?

Yes, Tdap vaccine is safe for pregnant women. There are several studies that have examined the safety of Tdap in pregnancy and have found that getting the vaccine does not increase the risk for complications during your pregnancy. Tdap is also safe to get if you are breastfeeding. Even after health officials determine a vaccine is safe, systems are in place to continuously monitor vaccines for safety.

The most common side effects of the Tdap vaccine are mild. They include redness, pain, or swelling at the injection site. These side effects usually go away within a few days if they occur.

Should babies be vaccinated against whooping cough?

The first protection against whooping cough that your baby will receive is from the Tdap vaccine you get during pregnancy. Because this protection wanes quickly, they will need to be protected with their own vaccines beginning at 2 months of age. Your baby will need a series of three diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (DTaP) vaccines at 2, 4, and 6 months to build up initial immunity. After that, additional doses are given in childhood and throughout life.

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