



PERTUSSIS – Prevention

Vaccines

The best way to prevent pertussis (whooping cough) among infants, children, teens, and adults is to get vaccinated. Also, keep infants and other people at high risk for pertussis complications away from infected people.

In the United States, the recommended pertussis vaccine for infants and children is called DTaP. This is a combination vaccine that protects against three diseases: diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. For maximum protection against pertussis, children need five DTaP shots. The first three shots are given at 2, 4, and 6 months of age. The fourth shot is given between 15 and 18 months of age, and a fifth shot is given before a child enters school, at 4–6 years of age. Parents can also help protect infants by keeping them away as much as possible from anyone who has cold symptoms or is coughing.

Vaccine protection for pertussis, tetanus and diphtheria fades with time. Before 2005, the only booster available contained protection against tetanus and diphtheria (called Td), and was recommended for teens and adults every 10 years. Today there are boosters for pre-teens, teens and adults that contain protection against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap). Pre-teens going to the doctor for their regular check-up at age 11 or 12 years should get a dose of Tdap. Teens who did not get this vaccine at the 11- or 12-year-old check-up should get vaccinated at their next visit. Adults who did not get Tdap as a pre-teen or teen should get one dose of Tdap instead of the Td booster. Most pregnant women who were not previously vaccinated with Tdap should get one dose of Tdap postpartum before leaving the hospital or birthing center. **Getting vaccinated with Tdap is especially important for families with and caregivers of new infants.**

The easiest thing for adults to do is to get Tdap instead of their next regular tetanus booster—that Td shot that they were supposed to get every 10 years. The dose of Tdap can be given earlier than the 10-year mark, so it is a good idea for adults to talk to a healthcare provider about what is best for their specific situation.

Adults

- Vaccine protection for pertussis, tetanus, and diphtheria fades with time, so adults need a booster shot. Experts recommend adults receive a tetanus and diphtheria booster (called Td) every 10 years **and** substitute a Tdap vaccine for one of the boosters. The dose of Tdap can be given earlier than the 10-year mark. **Getting vaccinated with Tdap is especially important for adults who are around infants.**
- Remember that even fully-vaccinated adults can get pertussis. If you are caring for infants, check with your healthcare provider about what's best for your situation.

Resources for Adults

- [Vaccine Information Statement \(Td/Tdap\)](#)  (66 KB, 2 pages)
- [Adolescent and Adult Vaccine Quiz](#)

Parents-to-be

- Pertussis can cause serious illness – especially in infants who are too young to be fully vaccinated. Because vaccine protection fades over time, parents, especially those who will be around infants – need to be revaccinated to protect against pertussis as well as tetanus and diphtheria.
- Women of child-bearing age should receive the Tdap booster shot – ideally before becoming pregnant. If not already vaccinated with Tdap, new mothers should get vaccinated before leaving the hospital with a newborn. Those around the infant – parents, siblings, grandparents, other family members, and nannies – are encouraged to get the appropriate vaccine (either DTaP or Tdap depending on age).

Infants and Children

- The best way to protect infants and children from pertussis is to make sure they get vaccinated. The recommended pertussis vaccine for infants and children is called DTaP. This is a combination vaccine that protects children against 3 diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis.
- For maximum protection against pertussis, children need 5 DTaP shots. The first 3 shots are given to infants at 2, 4, and 6 months of age. After receiving those 3 doses of DTaP, most infants are protected, but more shots are needed since this protection starts to fade once they become toddlers. The fourth shot is given between 15 and 18 months of age, and a fifth shot is given before a child enters school, at 4–6 years of age. Parents can also help protect infants by keeping them away as much as possible from anyone who has cold symptoms or is coughing.

Resources for Infants & Children

- [Vaccine Information Statement: DTaP](#)  (58 KB, 2 pages)

Adolescents

- Vaccine protection for pertussis, tetanus, and diphtheria can fade with time. Pre-teens going to the doctor for their regular check-up at age 11 or 12 years should get a dose of Tdap, a booster for tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis. Teens who did not get this vaccine at the 11- or 12-year-old check-up should get vaccinated at their next visit. **Getting vaccinated with Tdap is especially important for pre-teens and teens who will be around infants.**

Resources for Adolescents

- [Vaccine Information Statement \(Td/Tdap\)](#)  (66 KB, 2 pages)

Infection

If your doctor confirms that you have pertussis, your body will have a natural defense (immunity) to future infections. Since this immunity fades and does not offer lifelong protection, routine vaccines are recommended.

Antibiotics

Your local health department may recommend preventive antibiotics (medications that help prevent diseases caused by bacteria) to close contacts, including all household members of a pertussis patient, regardless of age and vaccination status. This might prevent or reduce the chance of getting pertussis. A close contact is anyone who had face-to-face contact or shared a

small space for a long period of time with an infected person or had direct contact with respiratory secretions (like from coughing or sneezing) from a person with pertussis.

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