

Whooping cough vaccine for pregnant women

If you are pregnant, it's best to have a whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine. This vaccine also protects you against diphtheria and tetanus, and boosts your immunity if you have already been vaccinated against these. It is subsidised for pregnant women from 28 weeks of pregnancy up to 38 weeks.

The later you are vaccinated, the more likely it is that only you (and not your baby) will be protected, especially if you are vaccinated within six days of giving birth.

You should have a vaccination during each pregnancy, even if you had a childhood whooping cough vaccination or one during a previous pregnancy.



What is whooping cough (pertussis)?

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a very contagious illness that causes bouts of severe coughing, which can last up to three months. It is dangerous for a baby under 1 year old to get whooping cough, as they may get very sick and need to go to hospital. Some babies who get whooping cough will die.

Why should I get vaccinated?

If you get whooping cough while you are pregnant or after your baby is born, there is a high chance you will pass it to your baby. Therefore, you should consider having the vaccine to reduce your risk of getting whooping cough. If you have the vaccine, it is also thought that you will pass on some immunity from whooping cough to your baby.

The vaccine is subsidised for all pregnant women from 28 weeks of pregnancy up to 38 weeks.

Your baby should still have their normal course of vaccinations, starting at 6 weeks.

What about other family members?

All other people in your household, as well as other close family members (such as grandparents) should have a whooping cough vaccination, as they could be at risk of passing it to your baby. The vaccine is not subsidised for adults, but it is free for children as part of the normal childhood vaccination programme.

Is this vaccine safe to have in pregnancy?

The United States Advisory Committee on Immunisation Practices (ACIP) has looked carefully at the information available on whooping cough vaccine in pregnant women, and has recommended that pregnant women should be vaccinated during a whooping cough outbreak.

As with all vaccines, there is a small risk of side effects, and for this reason you will need to stay at the practice for 20 minutes after receiving the vaccine.

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www.healthinfo.org.nz

If you cannot or choose not to have this vaccine during pregnancy, you should consider having it within two weeks of the birth of your baby. This will still protect you from whooping cough, but may not give protection to your baby. The vaccine is not subsidised after 38 weeks of pregnancy.

How do I get the vaccination?

Call your general practice team for an appointment to have the vaccination. Let them know you are coming in for the pertussis booster vaccine, as they may need to order it, which can take one to two days.

The cost of the vaccine and a contribution to giving the injection is subsidised.

For more information on whooping cough, visit www.immune.org.nz.

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