

We can SILENCE THE SOUNDS OF PERTUSSIS



"When a new baby comes home, it's important for the whole family, including grandparents, to see what they can do to keep the infant safe from dangerous diseases like pertussis."

– Gary L. Freed, MD, MPH
Professor of Pediatrics and Health Policy
at the University of Michigan

Becoming a grandparent begins a new stage of our lives and allows us to foster a special relationship with our children. Now that they are parents, our children turn to us for advice on how they can best nurture and protect their little ones, so we need to be armed with all the information we can find.

Did you know that one of the easiest things adults can do to help protect the health of a new baby is to update their own immunizations?

Many of us have had pertussis, or whooping cough as it's usually called, and some of us have even been immunized against it at some time in our lives. The problem is, if we haven't been immunized, we can get infected year after year. Even if we've been immunized, scientists discovered that the protection wears off after several years and we now need to get a booster shot to stop the infection cycle.

In recent years, whooping cough has made a strong comeback in the United States. A simple trip to our doctor protects us from getting infected and, more importantly, stops

us from transmitting this deadly disease to the babies in our lives.

Because the disease is typically mild in adults and adolescents, appearing to be a pesky cough or cold, it can be unknowingly transmitted to babies, who are at greatest risk of serious complications. According to a study from the University of North Carolina, when a source could be identified, family members and caregivers were responsible for more than 70 percent of infant cases of pertussis.

Babies are most vulnerable to infectious diseases like whooping cough before they begin their vaccination series that starts at around 2 months of age. Babies also have the greatest risk of suffering pertussis-related complications, hospitalization and even death. In fact, more than 90 percent of pertussis-associated deaths are in babies younger than 6 months old. So, it is up to the adults to create a "cocoon" to protect the baby.

The non-profit organization Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases (PKIDs) is spearheading the Silence the Sounds of Pertussis campaign to educate

family members about this disease and encourage everyone who will be around a baby to get the Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis booster shot (called the Tdap vaccine). This campaign supports the CDC recommendation that everyone between the ages of 11 and 64 receive the Tdap booster.

For more information on how you can help Silence the Sounds of Pertussis, visit www.pkids.org.

Check with your doctor to see if this immunization is right for you.

FAST FACTS

- The CDC recommends that everyone between the ages of 11 and 64 receive a Tdap booster
- Brain damage occurs in 1 out of every 250 children who get pertussis
- Pertussis causes about 10-20 deaths each year in the United States

