

Key Messages -Vaccines in Pregnancy

Pertussis Vaccination in Pregnancy

- Women who are 26 or more weeks pregnant who have not been previously immunized for pertussis in adulthood should get the vaccine.
- Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a bacterial infection that is easily spread.
- About three-quarters of infants who become ill with pertussis acquire the infection from their immediate family and household contacts.
- Infants under 6 months of age are at greatest risk of developing serious complications, or even dying, from pertussis despite treatment.
- Because pertussis vaccination for infants doesn't start until they are two months old, it's important for women to get vaccinated during pregnancy.
- New national guidelines* recommend that pregnant women get vaccinated against pertussis to reduce the incidence of pertussis, related hospitalizations, and death in infancy.
- Pregnant women only need to be vaccinated against pertussis one time, not once every pregnancy.
- Pertussis containing vaccine is given to children at 2, 4, 6 and 18 months, at school entry (4 to 6 years) and in Grade 7.
- Adults, especially close contacts (partners, parents, grandparents, childcare providers) of pregnant women, infants and young children should receive one dose of Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis) vaccine.
- Redness, swelling and pain at the injection site are the most common adverse reactions to pertussis-containing vaccines.

**National Advisory Committee on Immunization Guidelines*

Influenza Vaccine in Pregnancy

- Pregnant women are strongly encouraged to get a flu shot. It is safe and effective at any stage of pregnancy.
- Babies under 6 months old cannot receive a flu shot, so it's important for mothers to get immunized and pass on temporary immunity to their babies through their breast milk.
- Evidence shows that babies born during flu season whose mothers were vaccinated are less likely to be premature or have a low birth weight.
- Pain at the injection site is the most common adverse reaction to the influenza vaccine.

Breastfeeding and Immunization

- We strongly encourage women to breastfeed. Breast milk has many natural factors in it that support a baby's immune system. Breastfeeding also increases the baby's response to and the effectiveness of vaccinations.