



PERTUSSIS VACCINATION IN PREGNANCY

What is Pertussis?

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious bacterial disease of the airways. Whooping cough is easily spread through the air, by coughing, sneezing, or by direct contact with someone who is infected with the bacteria. The pertussis infection can cause coughing so severe that it can lead to choking, vomiting or even death.

Who is at risk?

Everyone who isn't vaccinated is at risk for the Pertussis bacteria. During the first two months of life, infants are at the highest risk for complications due to pertussis, especially long term hospitalization. After the pertussis vaccine was introduced in Canada in 1997/1998, there was a steady decline in the number of pertussis cases until 2011. However, between 2012 and 2015 numerous outbreaks occurred across Canada. 70% of admissions to hospital for pertussis occurred in infants younger than four months of age, and almost all deaths from pertussis (14 out of 15 between 2006 and 2015) happened among infants younger than two months of age (before the infants received their first vaccines). Infants do not receive their first series of pertussis vaccinations until 2, 4 and 6 months. Caregivers, who are not vaccinated, are the main source of pertussis transmission to young infants (SOGC, 2018).

How can I protect myself and my baby?

Vaccination is the recommended form of protection from Pertussis. The Tdap vaccination is available to all expecting mothers in pregnancy. It is ideally given between **27-32 weeks** gestation but can be given as early as **13 weeks** (SOGC, 2018). The vaccine can still be given after 32 weeks of gestational age and up until delivery, since it will prevent the mother from becoming a source of infection to the infant. However, the antibody levels may not be sufficient to protect the infant; it takes at least four weeks after vaccination to reach peak anti-pertussis antibody levels.

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What if I've been previously immunized?

The Pertussis vaccination is part of the standard childhood immunization schedule. The antibodies/immunity we create from childhood immunizations wear off in adulthood. This makes it necessary for adults to receive a booster in order to remain immune. Regardless of prior immunization to pertussis, Tdap vaccination is recommended during each pregnancy, in order to provide all babies immunity to pertussis prior to birth.

Is the vaccine safe?

Pertussis immunization is safe and well tolerated in pregnancy. Many studies have been done to determine the safety of the Pertussis vaccination in pregnancy. The conclusions of these studies state that there have been no adverse events related to immunization. Also, the Tdap vaccination doesn't contain additives such as, Thimerosal (mercury) therefore making it safe to have while pregnant and breastfeeding.

How can I get vaccinated?

- Most **pharmacies** in Alberta will administer you a Pertussis vaccine during your pregnancy (even without a prescription).
- Alternatively, you can contact your local **public health center** to schedule an appointment to be vaccinated (Info below).

Public Health Center	Address	Phone number
Acadia Community Health Center	132, 151 86 Ave SE	(403)944-7200
East Calgary Health Center	2 nd floor, 4751 8- Ave SE	(403) 955-1000
Northwest Community Health Center	#109, 1829 Ranchlands blvd NW	(403)943-9700
Shaganappi Complex	3415- 8 Ave SW	(403) 944-7373
Sheldon Chumir Health Center	5 th floor, 1213 4 th st SW	(403)955-6200
South Calgary Health Center	31 Sunpark Plaza SE	(403)943-9500
Thornhill Community Health Center	6671 Center st N	(403)944-7500
Village Square Community Health	2623 56 st NE	(403)944-7000

If you have more questions regarding the Pertussis vaccination please don't hesitate to ask your Meadows Maternity Physician.

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