

Cocooning Protects Babies Get Vaccinated Against Pertussis (Whooping Cough)



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH AND
EMERGENCY SERVICES

What is pertussis (whooping cough)?

Pertussis (whooping cough) is an infection caused by bacteria. Symptoms include the following:

- Begins with a runny nose and cough
- Soon the cough becomes “paroxysmal” with frequent severe coughing spells, often worse at night. Fever is usually absent or minimal
- A loud “whoop” is often heard when breathing in after coughing. Infants and adults who get whooping cough often don’t have the “whoop” when they cough
- Gagging, turning blue in the face or vomiting after coughing is common
- During the recovery period, the cough often continues for 6–10 weeks

What is cocooning?

- Cocooning is a way to protect babies from catching diseases, such as pertussis, from the people around them
- By ensuring pregnant mothers, parents, siblings, grandparents, friends, child-care providers and healthcare providers are vaccinated, the baby is surrounded with a cocoon of protection until he or she is old enough to be fully protected with vaccination

Why is cocooning important?

- Babies less than six months old are too young to have received all of the doses of vaccine that are needed to protect them against dangerous diseases
- Young infants have the highest rate of pertussis and most deaths caused by pertussis occur in infants less than six months of age

- Unvaccinated adults and family members, including parents and grandparents, are often the ones who unknowingly spread pertussis to babies
- Whooping cough cases and outbreaks continue to occur in Canada

How can we protect babies against whooping cough?

- Everyone has the opportunity to protect babies by being vaccinated and should receive a one time dose of Tdap vaccine in adulthood
- All pregnant women should get the Tdap vaccine for each pregnancy. This vaccine is safe anytime during pregnancy. It is best given between 27–32 weeks of pregnancy to provide the best protection for the infant by passing on protection from the mother before the baby is born.
- Infants and toddlers should be vaccinated on schedule with DTaP-IPV-Hib, while four to six year old children should receive the Tdap-IPV vaccine, according to the Ontario schedule
- Teenagers need one dose of Tdap vaccine at 14–16 years of age



Parent Resources

- Government of Ontario. (2015, December 1). Immunization and Vaccines. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/vaccines#!/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015, June 24). Surround babies with protection. Retrieved from: <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/pregnant/mom/protection.html>

Healthcare Provider Resources

- National Advisory Committee on Immunization. (2015, October 2). NACI Recommendations, statements, and updates. Retrieved from: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/>
- Public Health Agency of Canada. (2014, February). Canadian immunization guide: pertussis. Retrieved from: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cig-gci/p04-pert-coqu-eng.php>

Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or contact Public Health at 519-575-4400 ext. 5003.

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request.

Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services

Vaccine Preventable Disease Program
519-575-4400 ext. 5003

www.regionofwaterloo.ca/ph ■ 519-575-4400 ■ TTY 519-575-4608 ■ Fax 519-883-2241