

Whooping Cough Vaccine Recommendation for Babies and Young Children

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Whooping cough is a highly contagious respiratory illness that's making a comeback in the United States. Vaccines help prevent this serious disease in people of all ages, but it's especially important that we protect babies and young children because they're very vulnerable to serious complications.

Whooping cough may begin like a common cold, but unlike a cold, the coughing can last for weeks or months. People with whooping cough can cough violently and rapidly, over and over, gasping for air between bouts of coughing; this is what makes the 'whooping' sound. But many babies don't cough; instead, whooping cough can cause them to stop breathing. Any breathing problem in a baby or child is serious and you should call your health care professional or go to the emergency room right away.

About half of babies younger than one who get whooping cough end up in the hospital. For babies who are hospitalized, about one in four develops pneumonia, and, sadly, a small percentage die. Vaccines offer the best protection against whooping cough. The vaccine for babies and young children is called DTaP, while the vaccine for preteens, teens, and adults is called Tdap.

Babies can't begin their whooping cough vaccine series until they are two months old, but women can get vaccinated during pregnancy to give their babies protective antibodies before they are born. These antibodies provide protection until the baby is old enough to receive a whooping cough vaccine. After the initial dose of DTaP, babies need two more doses, at four months and six months, to build up high levels of protection against whooping cough. Booster shots are needed at 15 through 18 months of age and at four through six years of age to maintain a high level of protection against the disease during childhood. Adolescents also need a Tdap booster at 11 or 12.

Whooping cough vaccines are very safe, but, like any medicine, they can have side effects. Most children who get DTaP have no side effects. When side effects do occur, they're usually mild and include things like fever, vomiting, or redness, swelling, or pain at the site of the shot. These side effects happen in about one out of every four children who get the vaccine.

For families with health insurance, all or most of the cost of the vaccine is usually covered. The Vaccines for Children, or VFC, program provides vaccines for children 18 and younger who are not insured, Medicaid-eligible, or American Indian or Alaska Native. Parents can find a VFC provider by contacting their local health department.

For the best protection against whooping cough, all babies and young children should be vaccinated according to CDC's recommended schedule. To learn more, visit [cdc.gov/vaccines/parents](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents).

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.