Pertussis Vaccine

Pertussis Vaccine prevents Whooping Cough

The world of infectious diseases is very complex. Getting every child his vaccinations on time goes a long way in preventing this disease, though. Here are a few hurdles:

1. Whooping cough epidemics **occur in cycles** about every 3-5 years. The last major epidemic was in 2005, so it was bound to happen.

2. Immunity to whooping cough does not last forever—whether you are vaccinated for protection or even if you have had the disease. Teens and adults **lose their immunity** over time. That is why it is so important to get the whooping cough booster shot (called Tdap).

3. Babies under two months of age are **too young to be vaccinated.** And they do not have adequate immunity until they have received at least three doses of whooping cough vaccine (at six months of age). So, they rely on those around them to be protected by vaccination and not spread the infection to them. **Up to 80 percent of babies get whooping cough from a loved one** in their household (most often, it is spread from their mom).

4. Adults often do not know they have the illness. It **may look like a common cold** at the beginning of the infection and then it becomes a cough that just lingers on forever (whooping cough is also known as the “100 Day Cough”). People are contagious for the first four weeks of the illness.

So, what can you do to protect you and your family from whooping cough? Make sure your child is up to date on his shots and make sure you are too! If you cannot remember the last time you got your tetanus shot (or the last time you got one was from your own pediatrician!), you need to roll up your sleeve and get the Tdap (Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis). You can get the Tdap vaccine from your doctor or even at your local pharmacy/grocery store. You just have to ask for it.

It is such a major public health issue that the state of California has expanded its vaccine recommendations beyond the standard vaccination schedule. Californians who are ages 7 and up, those over age 64, and pregnant women are included in the expanded recommendations.

Getting the vaccine early

Remember, the moment babies are born, they are exposed to whole slew of bacteria and viruses on a daily basis. Just eating and drinking results in exposure to bacterial, viral, and fungal antigens. Consider this; at cold exposes a child to 4-10 antigens alone. So an infant with a normal immune system will not have any difficulty managing the few antigens introduced by vaccination.

Who Should and Should Not Receive the Vaccine

- Those with a history of a serious allergic reaction (such as anaphylaxis) to any of the vaccine components.

- Those with a history of encephalopathy (e.g. coma or prolonged seizures) not attributable to an identifiable cause within 7 days of administration of a vaccine with pertussis components should not receive a pertussis-containing vaccine.
- Brain problem that is unstable or getting worse
- People who are moderately or severely ill should consult with their physician before receiving any vaccine.

For more information about this subject please check:
The Center for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov/
The American Association of Pediatrics at www.aap.org