



Facts about the Whooping Cough Vaccine (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis – dTpa vaccine).

What is dTpa vaccine?

dTpa (Adacel or Boostrix) is a vaccine that is designed to boost your immunity to protect you against whooping cough (pertussis) infection. The dTpa vaccine also boosts your immunity against diphtheria and tetanus.

What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough is a highly infectious disease causing a severe, persistent cough.

Whooping cough spreads by close contact with someone who is infected.

Whooping cough can cause severe health problems in young babies, including pneumonia, seizures and in some cases, permanent disability or death. Around one in every 200 babies less than six months of age with whooping cough will die.

Why should new parents consider being vaccinated against whooping cough?

The number of babies under six months old catching whooping cough has increased dramatically in Australia over the last five years. The most important thing you can do to protect your baby is to make sure you and your family are up to date with their immunisations.

Parents and family members are the main source of whooping cough infection in babies. Vaccination helps protect you from catching whooping cough and passing on the infection to your baby.

Even if you were vaccinated as a child, you may no longer be protected; immunity provided by the vaccine fades after six to ten years.

A pertussis booster vaccination is recommended for all new parents and is being offered to new parents from 1 January 2011 to 30 June 2011 to help contain the current outbreak of pertussis in Australia.

Why do newborns need extra protection against catching whooping cough?

Because of small airways in the lungs, babies under six months of age are at particularly high risk of breathing problems if they catch whooping cough. Your baby will not have optimal protection against whooping cough until after they receive all three doses of the pertussis vaccine scheduled, typically completed at six months of age.

Is the dTpa vaccine safe for breastfeeding mothers?

There is no evidence of risk to the breastfeeding baby if the mother is vaccinated with dTpa (source: Australian Immunisation handbook 9th Edition).

What are the possible side effects of the dTpa vaccine?

Most side effects from the dTpa vaccine are minor and resolve quickly. **Common side effects include** a mild temperature (below 38°C), pain, redness and swelling at the injection site and feeling unwell. **Extremely rare side effects include** brachial neuritis (severe pain, shoulder and upper arm) and a severe allergic reaction.

Care after vaccination

- If the injection site becomes red and/or swollen apply a cool damp cloth.
- There may be some pain, fever, headache or tiredness. For headache and arm discomfort, take paracetamol as per manufacturer's recommendations. If fever persists, consult your doctor.
- Immediately seek medical advice if there is a reaction that you think is serious or unexpected.

Is there anything else you can do to protect your baby and children against whooping cough?

Yes. Vaccinate your newborn baby on time at 2, 4 and 6 months of age. The first dose of pertussis vaccine can even be given as early as 6 weeks of age. Your baby will have the best protection against this infection after receiving all three doses of whooping cough vaccine.

You should also make sure other children in your household are up-to-date with their whooping cough vaccines. After their baby doses, children will need a booster dose between 3 and a half and 4 years of age. This booster is important, as immunity can decrease quickly in young children. A second booster for adolescents is usually provided at Year 7 in school.