Protect Yourself and Help Protect Your Baby: Information for New Moms on the Tdap Vaccine

Congratulations on your new baby! Your baby is the greatest gift you will ever receive. One of your biggest jobs as a parent is to keep your child safe and healthy. One way do this is to make sure your children get all the immunizations they need to protect them from different diseases. But did you know that there is an immunization that *you as a parent should get* to keep your children safe?

The following is information written by the American Academy of Pediatrics about the importance of Tdap immunization for new moms (and anyone else who will be in close contact with their newborns, including dads).

What is Tdap?

Tdap stands for 3 serious diseases.

- **T**etanus—also called *lockjaw*, a painful tightening of the muscles, including the jaw, which gets "locked" shut, making it impossible to open the mouth or swallow and can lead to death.
- **D**iphtheria—a severe throat infection caused by a germ makes it difficult to breathe and can affect the heart and nervous system and can lead to death.
- **P**ertussis—also called *whooping cough*, which causes severe coughing, vomiting, and trouble sleeping for months in adults. In infants this infection can cause sleep problems, severe cough, and pneumonia that last for months and can even lead to brain damage or death.

Bacteria cause all of these diseases. Diphtheria and pertussis are spread from person to person. Tetanus enters the body through cuts, scratches, or wounds.

Why should new moms get vaccinated?

In their first 4 to 6 months, babies are more prone to infections because their immune systems are immature. Also, they haven't received their first few doses of the vaccine that protects them from diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis yet. During this time, moms who haven't been immunized or may have lost their immunity from earlier immunizations could pick up these diseases and pass them on to their babies. This is why it's important for new moms to make sure they are protected. Check with your doctor to see if you need the Tdap vaccine.

Others who should get vaccinated

It is also recommended that anyone who will be in close contact with your baby be vaccinated as well. This includes dads, grandparents, other relatives, and child care providers younger than 64 years. They should ask their doctor if Tdap vaccine is needed. Other children in the family should be sure their tetanus, diptheria, and pertussis immunizations are up to date also.

When is Tdap recommended?

Before Tdap is recommended, your doctor will review your immunization history to decide if and when you should get the Tdap vaccine. For instance, if you have not received a pertussis vaccine since age 9 years, the timing for administration of Tdap is determined by your last tetanus vaccine booster dose. Tdap can be administered as early as 2 years since the last tetanus dose if needed, but a 5-year wait is usually recommended between the last tetanus vaccine and Tdap vaccine for all persons older than 10 years. For anyone older than 10 or 11 years, only a single dose of pertussis vaccine (Tdap) administered after age 10 years is needed.

Are there any dangers to getting the Tdap vaccine?

Like medicines, vaccines can cause allergic reactions in some people. However, this is very rare. Most side effects are mild and temporary and include

- Pain at the injection site
- Redness or swelling at the injection site
- Mild fever, headache, nausea, and vomiting

Tell your doctor if have had problems with vaccines in the past.

Just one shot

Getting the Tdap vaccine now will give you 10 years or more of protection from these diseases and help you prevent passing them on to your new baby. Isn't it great to know that just one shot can help keep you and your new baby safe and healthy? For more information about this vaccine, talk with your doctor.

American Academy of Pediatrics

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