

Whooping Cough and Kids

June 2015

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As a parent, there is nothing more important than safeguarding your child's health. That's why you should know the facts about whooping cough (pertussis) and the vaccine that protects against it. Make sure you and your family get the right dose at the right time.

What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough is a very contagious respiratory disease. It's spread by coughing or sneezing. Whooping cough is most dangerous for babies. They can get it from adults or other children who have whooping cough. Babies can have severe coughing spells that make it hard to breathe. Whooping cough can lead to pneumonia, seizures, brain damage, and death.

How can I protect my child from whooping cough?

The best tool for protection is the whooping cough vaccine. In addition to the vaccine, make sure that you and your child wash your hands, cover your cough, and stay home and away from others when you are sick. It is especially important to protect babies and pregnant moms. If you suspect that you or your child have whooping cough, seek immediate medical care.

Who should get the vaccine and when should they get it?

Babies get a dose of DTaP at 2, 4, 6, and 15-18 months. At 4-6 years of age, they should receive a 5th DTaP dose. When kids are 11 or 12 years old, they get a dose of Tdap. Newborn babies can't get a whooping cough vaccine until they are 6 weeks old. The best way to protect babies is for pregnant women to get vaccinated in their third trimester, between 27 to 36 weeks. Adults that haven't had a Tdap dose, especially those who are healthcare workers or take care of young babies, need to get a dose Tdap.

Child care and school requirements

Children entering child care or preschool must be up-to-date with their immunizations. For kindergarten entry, kids must have 5 DTaP shots.

Where can I find the whooping cough vaccine?

Ask your doctor, nurse, or local health department to find out more about the Tdap or DTaP vaccine and where you can get it. Washington provides all recommended vaccines at no cost for kids through age 18, available from providers across the state. Providers may charge an office visit fee and an administration fee to give the vaccine. People who can't afford the administration fee can ask to have it waived. Call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 or go to [ParentHelp123](#) to find a healthcare provider or immunization clinic.

For more information, visit the Washington State Department of Health at www.doh.wa.gov/whoopingcough.