



PERTUSSIS/ WHOOPING COUGH

If you are the parent of an infant or are planning to become pregnant in the near future, it is important that you be immunized against pertussis. Reports of pertussis, commonly referred to as whooping cough, have been increasing, especially among adults and adolescents even though they have received childhood vaccinations. It not only threatens adults and adolescents, but it also poses a dangerous threat to vulnerable infants.

There were 25,616 reported cases of pertussis in 2005—a 119% increase from 2003.¹

The greatest increases in pertussis disease are in the adult and adolescent populations.

Most people are vaccinated against pertussis when they are infants and young children. Unfortunately, their immunity wanes as they get older. This leaves them susceptible to contracting pertussis and passing it on to others.

A recent example of this is an international, multicenter study that was conducted to identify the sources of infant pertussis. Within this study, the sources of infant pertussis were found to be:²

- The mother in 37% of cases
- The father in 18% of cases
- A sibling in 16% of cases

Overall, the study found that a household member was responsible for anywhere from 76% to 83% of infant pertussis cases when the source could be identified. The study suggests that vaccinating an infant's parents, especially the mother, may be helpful in protecting the infant from pertussis.²

The danger with pertussis is that it can often be confused with other respiratory disorders. Symptoms may include runny nose, sneezing, slight fever, severe cough, vomiting, and exhaustion.³

Until recently, there was no vaccination to protect adults and adolescents from pertussis once their immunity faded. Now there is a vaccine that is available for people from 11 through 64 years of age to help reduce the risk of infection.

Please talk to your health-care professional to see whether a tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine is right for you and the other adult and adolescent members of your family. To learn more about the vaccination of adults and adolescents against pertussis, please visit

<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/vaccine/tdap/default.htm>.

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Summary of notifiable diseases—United States, 2005. Published March 30, 2007, for *MMWR*. 2005;54(53):77.
2. Wendelboe AM, Njamkepo E, Bourillon A, et al. Transmission of *Bordetella pertussis* to young infants. *Pediatr Infect Dis J*. 2007;26(4):293-299.
3. CDC. *Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases*. Atkinson W, Hamborsky J, McIntyre L, Wolfe C, eds. 10th ed. Washington, DC: Public Health Foundation; 2007:81-100.