

How to Protect Yourself from Whooping Cough *By Christina Szabo, NP*

Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is a highly contagious respiratory illness that causes uncontrollable coughing along with other respiratory symptoms. It is especially dangerous for young children and infants less than one year of age. Outbreaks generally occur every 3 to 5 years. In 2009 there was an outbreak in California during which more than 6,700 cases were reported. This was the largest outbreak in the US since 1947.

Recent research has indicated that in order for adults to maintain immunity to pertussis, an adult booster dose of the vaccine is needed. This vaccine has been added as part of the tetanus vaccine which is recommended every 10 years. Individuals age 19 and older should receive the vaccine with pertussis (called Tdap) to provide immunity for whooping cough.

Adults in close contact with children under 12 months old are recommended to receive an early booster dose of Tdap rather than wait for the next scheduled tetanus booster interval. Infants are not fully immunized against the disease and are

more susceptible to infection. The disease can be more serious for infants, causing pneumonia, complications in other organs, hospitalization and death. Although pertussis can cause severe illness in adults, it usually causes a mild illness that may be mistaken for an upper respiratory infection. It may even not cause any symptoms.

This year the Centers for Disease Control recommended that pregnant women should receive the Tdap vaccine during pregnancy, even if it has been given previously. If your last tetanus immunization was given before 2005, it does not cover pertussis.

The Tdap vaccine should NOT be given to those:

- allergic to the vaccine or its components
- who developed encephalopathy within 7 days of receiving a dose of pertussis vaccine

If any of the following conditions are present, your healthcare provider should determine if vaccination is safe:

- Developed Guillain - Barré syndrome within 6 weeks of receiving vaccine
- Progressive or unstable neurological disorder
- Moderate or severe illness

Protect Yourself From the Flu!

Flu shots are now available at our Phoenix office and at our C-1 and F-1 Glendale locations on a walk-in basis during regular hours. No appointment is needed. The vaccine is designed by the Centers for Disease Control to address the flu strains most likely to spread during the upcoming flu season. Flu shots are \$35 for cash pay patients and we are happy to bill insurance for our existing patients.



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