



ParentPages

SHOTSMARTS FROM IMMUNIZE GEORGIA

Protect Babies from Pertussis – Get Your Shots

Did you know that you or the teen in your home can give pertussis (whooping cough) to a baby who can die from it? That child may be your own or your niece or nephew, your best friend's baby or your neighbor's baby.

As a child, you and your teen received a series of vaccines (shots) called DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis) to protect against pertussis. The protection from these shots does not last a lifetime though. More teens and adults are now getting pertussis and some don't even know they have it.

For teens and adults, pertussis can look like a common cold. It can show up as a cough that gets worse, especially at night. People with pertussis may not have a fever. By the time a person knows the illness is from pertussis, the germs may have spread in any place where the person has been coughing. While it may be mild for teens or adults, it can last up to two weeks or more – the Chinese termed it the "100-day cough." Some can miss a lot of work or school or even end up in the hospital with cracked ribs (from coughing so hard) and high medical bills.

Pertussis can spread fast when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The person who gets pertussis usually gets it from face-to-face contact with someone who lives in the same home. People can also get it in public places with close settings such as school classrooms. Between 2000 and 2006, studies found that 75 percent of babies less than six months of age with pertussis got it from one or more household members.¹

Babies under six months of age are at the most risk for severe problems from pertussis. They can stop breathing, turn blue because of low oxygen levels or even have a seizure. Babies can get very sick quickly, may need to be admitted to the hospital and can die. Between 2000 and 2006, 93 percent of the deaths from pertussis were in babies less than 12 months of age. Nevertheless pertussis can be prevented.¹

What can you do?

- If you have a baby in your house, get the Tdap booster vaccine.*
- See your doctor for a severe cough that lasts more than two weeks.
- Keep babies and pregnant women away from people who are coughing.
- Be sure babies complete the recommended DTaP series of shots.**
- Take your teen for his health check at age 11, and ask about the shots he may need.
- Take time to read stories of families who have been impacted by pertussis at http://www.pkids.org/dis_pert_familystories.php (Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases).

* There are two tetanus toxoid-diphtheria-acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccines that were licensed in 2005 for use in adolescents and adults for protection against pertussis starting at age 11. One dose of Tdap is recommended in place of the tetanus-diphtheria (Td) booster.

** Five doses of the diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis (DTaP) vaccine are recommended at ages 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 12 to 15 months, and 4 to 6 years of age.

1. "Prevention of Pertussis, Tetanus, and Diphtheria Among Pregnant and Postpartum Women and Their Infants." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. May 14, 2008 / 57(Early Release);1-47.

http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr57e0514a1.htm?s_cid=rr57e0514a1_e ■

Protect Your Children This Flu Season - Protect Yourself and Protect Others

Influenza or “flu” season is upon us, and it is more important than ever that we protect everyone in the family. Eighty-seven children died from the flu last year - three from Georgia. Over half of childhood deaths from flu were in children from 5 to 17 years of age.

School age children have the highest rates of getting influenza. Studies have shown that school age children spread flu to older folks, babies and other family members who are not able to get their flu vaccine.

New this year - To keep everyone safe, all children 6 months through 18 years of age should get a flu vaccine.

Some things to consider:

- Getting the flu vaccine and handwashing are the best ways to prevent the flu in yourself or others.
- The flu is not a cold, mild illness or upset stomach (stomach flu) – it is a life-threatening respiratory infection.
- Side effects from the flu vaccine are mild and may include soreness where the shot was given. Some may develop aches and a low grade fever. These are signs the body is developing protection against the flu and are MUCH less severe than the flu.
- The cost of a flu vaccine is much less than the costs of missing work or school and needing healthcare.

- The vaccine is not 100 percent effective and sometimes a person will still get the “flu” even after getting a flu vaccine. The illness will be shorter and less severe though.
- There are two types of flu vaccines – an injectable flu vaccine and a nasal spray flu vaccine. Talk with your doctor about which type is best for each family member.

Take Action

- If you or your child get the flu, reduce contact with others by staying home from work or school, if possible. Also be sure to wash hands often and cover your cough.
- Ask your doctor for an antiviral medication which can lessen the severity of symptoms and reduce the number of days you are sick. This medication works against the flu virus (antibiotics kill bacteria, not viruses) and needs to be taken within two days of getting the flu.
- Babies under 6 months of age are too young to get the flu vaccine. If you live or work around a baby under 6 months of age, be sure to get the flu vaccine.
- Anyone with diabetes, heart disease and asthma should get the flu vaccine because the flu can worsen these conditions. There are some who cannot get the flu vaccine though. Your doctor will tell you if you should or should not get the flu vaccine.**
- Please note - for children 6 months up to 9 years of age receiving the flu vaccine for the first time, two doses are needed with at least four weeks between each dose.

Families Fighting Flu [www.familiesfightingflu.org] was created by parents who have lost their children to the flu. To understand why your children need to get their flu vaccine, visit Families Fighting Flu and read more about their children – Marques, Amanda, Emily, Martin, Julie, Breanne, Jessica and Alana. Protect your children this flu season - protect yourself and protect others.

* Please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/flu for answers to questions you have about seasonal flu or getting the flu vaccine.

** Please visit Prevent Childhood Influenza at www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org and be sure to complete the Flu Risk Calculator. ■

