

For parents of newborn babies

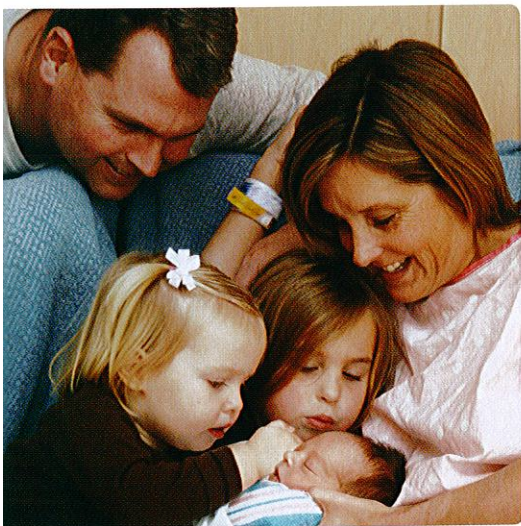
Parents can protect their newborn baby from whooping cough by protecting themselves with a free vaccine.

Why should parents have the vaccine?

The number of babies under six months old catching whooping cough has increased dramatically in Victoria over the last five years.

Around one in every 200 babies under six months of age who catch whooping cough will die. Some babies will suffer permanent disability from brain and lung damage.

Parents and family members are the main source of whooping cough infection in babies. Vaccination protects you from catching and passing on the infection to your baby.



Even if you were vaccinated as a child, you may no longer be protected; immunity provided by the vaccine fades after six to ten years.

You should get the vaccination as soon as possible after the birth of your baby. The partner of the pregnant woman can be vaccinated at any time during the pregnancy.

The vaccine is safe for adults and children, including:

- breastfeeding mothers, and
- people who have had a recent tetanus booster.

What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is a highly infectious disease causing a severe, persistent cough. In young babies the cough is often followed by breathing problems and vomiting. Whooping cough is spread by coughs and sneezes from an infected person.

Severe complications such as pneumonia, bleeding, convulsions, coma, and permanent brain and lung damage can occur.

Why do babies need extra protection against whooping cough?

Babies under six months of age are particularly at risk, as they are not protected against whooping cough until their six-month vaccination schedule is complete. Infected babies often require admission to hospital. A mother does not pass any protection against whooping cough onto her baby whilst pregnant or breastfeeding.

How do I obtain the free vaccine?

Ask your health care provider about getting the free whooping cough vaccine called Boostrix®, which also contains protection against diphtheria and tetanus. (Your doctor may charge you a consultation fee).

Some councils may also provide the vaccine. Contact your local council directly or ask your maternal and child health nurse.

Who can receive the vaccine for free?

The vaccine is available free until 30 June 2012 to parents, adoptive parents and foster parents of newborn babies. Partners can be vaccinated at any time during the pregnancy.

Other ways to protect your baby from whooping cough:

- Vaccinate your baby on time.
- Make sure all your children are up-to-date with whooping cough vaccines. Booster doses are required at four and 15 years of age.
- Anyone regularly in contact with your baby (grandparents, childcare and healthcare workers) should be vaccinated.

Where can I get further information about whooping cough?

More information is available from:

- your doctor or practice nurse
- maternity ward hospital staff
- your maternal and child health nurse
- the Department of Health Immunisation Section, phone 1300 882 008
- the following websites:

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation

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