

# Stop Pertussis.

## Pregnant Women Rely on You.



### Clinicians Can Prevent Pertussis

Newborns can die from pertussis. Infants most often contract pertussis from family members. Women of childbearing age should get a pertussis booster shot (Tdap) if they do not have documentation of prior Tdap vaccination.

#### Tdap can be given:

- **Before** pregnancy (ideal)
- **During** pregnancy (2nd and 3rd trimester preferred)
- **After** giving birth (even while breastfeeding)  
Immunize postpartum women who have not received a Tdap shot, before hospital discharge.
- To other family members and close contacts of infants anytime before delivery.

### Think Pertussis

- Pertussis is often misdiagnosed. It starts with mild, cold-like respiratory symptoms.
- Typically, after 1-2 weeks, symptoms in adults progress to severe coughing attacks that may include:
  - Post-tussive vomiting
  - A high-pitched “whoop”
  - Sweating episodes, gagging, choking sensation
  - Complications, such as broken ribs or pneumonia
- Pertussis immunity wanes, so it is possible to get pertussis even with a history of vaccination or disease.

### Test for Pertussis

If your patient has pertussis-like symptoms (especially in the 3rd trimester):

- Promptly obtain a [nasal aspirate](#) (preferred specimen) or nasopharyngeal swab for PCR and/or culture.

### Treat Pertussis, Reduce Transmission

- Antibiotics stop transmission, and if given early, may reduce pertussis severity. Erythromycin, azithromycin, or clarithromycin are the preferred antibiotics for [pertussis treatment or postexposure prophylaxis](#) during pregnancy.
- If your pregnant patient is exposed to pertussis, particularly in her 3rd trimester, prophylactic antibiotic therapy is recommended to protect her newborn.
- If she has pertussis, especially near-term or at delivery, treat her with antibiotics and ensure that her newborn and household contacts receive prophylactic antibiotic therapy.
- Place new mothers with pertussis on droplet precautions during their hospitalization for delivery or until they have received 5 days of a full course of antibiotics. However, if both mother and infant are receiving antibiotic treatment, it is not necessary to isolate the baby from the mother and breast feeding is encouraged.



### Dylan's Story

*I caught pertussis in my 9th month of pregnancy. Two weeks after giving birth, my son Dylan died of pertussis that he caught from me. My doctor thought it was just a cold. — Mariah, Dylan's Mom* (Watch her full story on [www.ShotbyShot.org](http://www.ShotbyShot.org))

For more information, visit [www.pregnancyshotsca.org](http://www.pregnancyshotsca.org)

