

PREVENTING PERTUSSIS IN INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

In February of 2014, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization issued an updated statement regarding pertussis vaccination in pregnancy.

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/acs-dcc/2014/pvip-vcpg_0214-eng.php

Tdap in Pregnancy:

- **All pregnant women at or after 26 weeks of pregnancy who have not received a dose of a pertussis-containing vaccine in adulthood should be encouraged to receive Tdap vaccination.**
- Immunization with Tdap has been shown to be safe in pregnant women and allows high levels of antibodies to be transferred to newborns during the first two months of life when the morbidity and mortality from pertussis infection is the highest.
- Immunization should not be delayed until close to delivery since this may provide insufficient time for optimal transfer of antibodies and direct protection of the infant against pertussis.
- In special circumstances, such as an outbreak situation, all pregnant women who are 26 weeks gestation or greater may be offered Tdap vaccination irrespective of their immunization history based on recommendations from local public health officials.
- The safety of the Tdap vaccine during pregnancy is well established. Vaccination with Tdap between 27 and 36 weeks' gestation provides maternal protection and maximum antibody transfer to the fetus.

In addition, all caregivers and close contacts, both children and adults, should be up to date with their pertussis immunization.

For more information, please see the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness Fact Sheet, Preventing Pertussis in Infants and Young Children.

http://novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/Preventing_Pertussis_in_Infants_and_Young_Children.pdf

Infants and young children are at particular risk of contracting pertussis until they have completed their primary immunization series. For maximum protection, children need a primary series of pertussis-containing vaccine at two, four, six months followed by booster doses at 18 months, between four to six years of age, and again as part of the school-based immunization program, which in Nova Scotia, now occurs in Grade 7.

The best way to prevent mortality and significant morbidity from pertussis is for physicians and other health care providers to:

- **offer one dose of pertussis containing vaccine (Tdap) to pregnant women (≥ 26 weeks of gestation) who have not been previously vaccinated against pertussis in adulthood;**
- **ensure that infants and young children are immunized according to the recommended schedule; and**
- **recommend that caregivers and close contacts of infants and young children receive a pertussis immunization.**