

# Pertussis Vaccination Isn't Just for Babies!

North Dakota Department of Health Immunization Program

## *What is pertussis?*

Pertussis, also known as “whooping cough,” is a very contagious disease caused by bacteria. **The disease is usually mild in older children and adults, but is often very serious for infants.**

Pertussis begins with symptoms similar to the common cold. As the disease progresses, uncontrollable coughing spells can cause a person to gag, vomit or turn blue from lack of air. This type of coughing can last for six weeks or more.



## *How does pertussis spread?*

The disease is spread through the air by infectious droplets. Pertussis is frequently misdiagnosed in adults because upper respiratory symptoms, such as a nagging cough, often resemble bronchitis. **Adults with pertussis have been shown to be a frequent source of infection for young infants.** Many adults may not even realize they are infected with the disease.



## *What can I do to protect my baby and myself?*

**You can help prevent exposing young infants to pertussis by getting a pertussis vaccine.** A single dose of the tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis vaccine, referred to as Tdap, is recommended for all older children and adults. It is also recommended that women receive the Tdap vaccine during each pregnancy, preferably between 27 and 36 weeks gestation. If not during pregnancy, new mothers should receive Tdap immediately after giving birth. Parents, grandparents, siblings and caregivers should be immunized at least two weeks before having contact with the baby.



Contact your health-care provider or local public health unit today.

To learn more about pertussis, visit [www.cdc.gov/pertussis](http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis).

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☎ 701.328.3386 or toll-free 800.472.2180

🌐 [www.ndhealth.gov/immunize](http://www.ndhealth.gov/immunize)



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