Pertussis vaccine now funded for pregnant women under National Immunisation Program (NIP)

- Protects the newborn especially in the first 6 weeks of life via antibodies that cross the placenta.
- dTpa vaccine is recommended during the third trimester of each pregnancy. Optimal time is between 20 to 32 weeks but can be given at any time during the third trimester.
- Women who are not vaccinated during pregnancy should be vaccinated as soon as possible after delivery. dTpa can be given to breastfeeding women.

Vaccine safety in pregnancy
Studies show no increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes (such as stillbirth, fetal distress or low birth weight) related to pertussis vaccination during pregnancy. 9

Pertussis in adults

- 40% of pertussis notifications in 2018 were adults 20 years and over 1
- Patients and physicians may not be aware of the disease and diagnostic tests sometimes have limited sensitivity. Therefore, pertussis is likely to be under-diagnosed.
- Pertussis can cause significant morbidity in adults, with a cough persisting for up to 3 months.
  - Average of 10 work days lost
  - Disruption to daily life
- Adults (and adolescents) are a significant reservoir of infection.

Infants less than 6 months are at greatest risk of severe illness and death.

People in contact with infants
(Not funded under NIP for these individuals)

- Adult household contacts and carers (e.g. fathers and grandparents of infants) should ideally receive a dTpa vaccine at least 2 weeks before beginning close contact with the infant.
- A booster vaccine is recommended for those who have not received one in the previous 10 years.
- Adults working with infants and children under 4 should receive a dose of dTpa vaccine with a booster dose every ten years.
- All healthcare workers should receive a dose of dTpa with a booster dose every ten years.

Create a circle of protection for babies by vaccinating people in contact with them

- Immunity acquired through vaccination or exposure to pertussis wanes and requires revaccination for protection.
- dTpa is recommended for any adult who wishes to reduce the likelihood of becoming ill with pertussis.
- Any adult who needs a tetanus-containing vaccine can have dTpa vaccine rather than dT, especially if they have not previously had a dTpa in adulthood.

YOU play a critical role in the patient’s decision-making: 73% of people would take the doctor’s advice and have the pertussis vaccine.
In 2018, 12,575 cases of pertussis were reported nationally.

Children under 15 years of age accounted for 47% of the pertussis notifications.

Vaccination side effects
Compared to whole-cell pertussis vaccines (DTPw), acellular pertussis vaccines are associated with a much lower incidence of:
- Fever (20% vs 45%)
- Local reactions (10% vs 40%)

Extensive limb swelling can occur with booster doses of DTPa. Such reactions commence within 48 hours of vaccination, last 1–7 days and resolve completely.

Cause
Pertussis (whooping cough) is an acute respiratory illness caused by the Bordetella pertussis bacterium.

Transmission
Pertussis is highly contagious and only found in humans. It spreads by airborne droplets when an infected person sneezes or coughs. The droplets can be breathed in by others or passed on to others by touching a contaminated surface.

People with pertussis are most infectious in the first three weeks after the onset of symptoms.

Symptoms
Symptoms will start to appear 1–3 weeks after exposure to the bacteria. The disease begins like a cold, with a runny nose, mild fever and a cough.

The cough gets worse and can last 1–2 months or longer. The illness is characteristically known for repeated violent bouts of coughing followed by a whooping inspiration. The whoop may be absent in very young infants, older children and adults.

Some children cough so much they vomit afterwards.

Vaccine efficacy
A 3-dose primary series of immunisation with DTPa vaccine at 2, 4 and 6 months of age results in 84% protective efficacy against severe disease.

Immunity to pertussis wanes over time. Effectiveness of 3 doses of DTPa vaccine declined progressively from 2 years of age to less than 50% by 4 years of age.

A large trial in adolescents and adults demonstrated overall vaccine efficacy against confirmed pertussis of 92% within 2.5 years of vaccination.

Who should be vaccinated?
Infants and children FREE pertussis vaccine is available under the National Immunisation Program (NIP): see table.

Older children and teenagers FREE catch up vaccines are now available through the NIP for individuals 10 to 19 years of age.

Humanitarian entrants FREE catch up vaccines are now available through the NIP for refugees and other humanitarian entrants aged 20 years and over.

Adults dTpa is recommended for any adult who wishes to reduce the likelihood of becoming ill with pertussis, but particularly important for special risk groups.

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The Immunisation Coalition is a not for profit advocacy group with a mission to create awareness regarding the importance of immunisation. Immunisation still provides the best protection against infectious diseases. We work with consumers, health professionals, organisations with an interest in immunisation, and government health agencies, ensuring that the information provided to consumers through our website and other communication channels is current, easily understood and scientifically informed.

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