By: Anne Dodds, Keystone STARS, Health & Safety Specialist, Child Care Consultants

Do you work with infants or young children? Are you a grandparent?

You should get a “Pertussis Vaccine”

There’s been a resurgence of whooping cough throughout the nation in recent years. The disease is extremely contagious and can lead to severe respiratory problems and even death.

Vaccines are available to help prevent whooping cough, also known as pertussis. Whooping cough is caused by Bordetella pertussis bacteria. Two kinds of vaccines used today help protect against whooping cough other diseases. These vaccines are:

- Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTaP) vaccines; and
- Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap) vaccines.

Babies and children younger than 7 years old receive DTaP, while older children and adults receive Tdap.

Many adults working with infants and young children have not had a recent pertussis immunization. This potentially places the children, who are at an age when they are most vulnerable, at risk of severe disease. With increasing use of child care, we must ensure we are doing everything we can to protect our children—that includes protecting our own health as well.

Vaccine protection for pertussis (whooping cough), tetanus, and diphtheria fades with time. Therefore, CDC recommends a single dose of Tdap for adults 19 years old or older who have not previously received a Tdap vaccine.

The CDC recommends adults receive a tetanus and diphtheria booster (called Td) every 10 years. The easiest thing for adults to do is to get the Tdap vaccination, which also includes whooping cough. Being up-to-date with Tdap is especially important for adults who are around babies.

Remember that even fully-vaccinated adults can get pertussis. If you are caring for babies, are a grandparent, or work in an environment caring for young children, check with your healthcare professional about what’s best for you.
Childhood Vaccinations
By: Lauren Bealafeld Brungo, MPH, BSN, RN, Chief Nursing Officer, Allegheny County Health Department

As every parent knows, this time of year means their child is back in school. In addition to making sure that they have all the required supplies, parents should also be making sure that their kids have all the required vaccines. If your child is entering kindergarten they will need to have the following vaccines to start on time:

- Four doses of tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (usually given as DTaP) with one dose being given after their 4th birthday;
- Four doses of polio vaccine, with one dose being given after their 4th birthday;
- Two doses of measles, mumps, and rubella (usually given as MMR);
- Two doses of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine or evidence that the child had chickenpox; and
- Three doses of Hepatitis B vaccine.

For entry into seventh grade, students need, in addition to the kindergarten vaccines, one dose of tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (this time given as Tdap) vaccine, and one dose of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4). For this age group, the health department also recommends that your child get the cancer preventing vaccine known as the human papilloma virus (HPV9) vaccine. This will protect your child against many types of cancer that they can develop later in life. We encourage you to learn more about this vaccine on the CDC’s [website](https://www.cdc.gov). If the HPV9 vaccine series is started when the child is less than 15 years old, they will only need two doses of this vaccine. If it is started at 15 or older, they will need three doses of the vaccine.

For entry into 12th grade, your child will need to have all the vaccines required for kindergarten and seventh grade. In addition to these vaccines, they are required to have a booster dose of the MCV4 vaccine after they turn 16 years old. For the 12th grade students, the health department recommends vaccination with the meningitis B series. Meningitis B is not protected against with the two doses of MCV4 that your child receives. This vaccine protects against four strains of meningitis, meningitis A, C, Y, and W.

Meningitis B is found to be the cause of about 1/3 of all meningitis cases. This is a separate vaccine from the MCV4 vaccine, which your child is required to have for school. There are two different FDA approved Meningitis B vaccines on the market and we encourage you to speak with your child’s primary care provider to learn which vaccine they provide and the schedule for getting your child immunized.

We encourage everyone 6 months and older to get vaccinated against the flu every year. Remember, the flu infection can last for a week or longer, and can be fatal. The flu shot cannot cause the flu and it is widely available, sometimes even at your local grocery store!

Don’t forget that simple steps can keep your family healthy all year round: wash your hands every time you come home to prevent any outside germs from entering your home; cough and sneeze into your elbow instead of your hands; and blow or wipe your nose using a tissue or handkerchief instead of bare hands.

If you would like more information, please contact us. To unsubscribe, email Antibioticawareness@pa.gov