

Catherine Street Medical Centre

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How common is whooping cough?

So far in 2013 (up to Sept) there have been more than 130 cases of whooping cough and there were over 450 cases in 2012. Most cases have been in babies less than 6 months of age and sadly two babies died as a result of whooping cough in 2012.

How does the whooping cough vaccine protect you and your baby?

The vaccine stimulates your immune system to produce high levels of antibodies to the whooping cough bacteria. These antibodies will also pass to your baby in the womb and protect them during the first few months of life.

If you, or your baby, come in contact with whooping cough the antibodies will attack these bacteria, and will protect you and your baby from whooping cough.

The antibodies you pass to your baby in the womb decline rapidly in the first six months of life so it is important your baby gets the routine childhood vaccines (which include whooping cough vaccine) on time at 2, 4 and 6 months.

When should I get the whooping cough vaccine?

The best time to get the whooping cough vaccine is between 27 – 36 weeks of your pregnancy. Giving the vaccine at this time will give your baby the best protection.

Getting the vaccine in later pregnancy will give you and your baby some protection.

You can get the vaccine in the first week after your baby is born. This will protect you from catching whooping cough and passing it on to your baby. However vaccination after your baby is born means you cannot pass the antibodies to them for protection in their first few months.

What about breast feeding?

The vaccine is safe to give if you are going to or are breast feeding.

Is it safe for pregnant women to be vaccinated?

Yes. The vaccine is safe for pregnant women. Whooping cough vaccine is recommended for pregnant women in the UK, US, New Zealand and Australia.

This whooping cough vaccine has been studied in pregnant women in the US and no risk as been found. Reactions are generally mild and serious side effects are very rare.