

Maternity information factsheet

Whooping cough (pertussis) ADACEL® vaccine in pregnancy (from 16 weeks onwards)

We have written this factsheet as a guide to having the whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine while you are pregnant (from 16 weeks onwards).

What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough (medically known as pertussis) is a serious infection that causes long bouts of coughing and choking, making it hard to breathe. The 'whoop' is caused by gasping for breath after each bout of coughing, though babies do not always make this noise.

Why do I need a whooping cough vaccine?

Whooping cough is a highly infectious, serious illness that can lead to pneumonia and permanent brain damage, particularly in young babies. Most babies with whooping cough will need hospital treatment. In very severe cases, whooping cough can be fatal.

The likelihood of your baby developing whooping cough in the first few weeks of life is reduced by up to 93% if you have the vaccine between 16 and 32 weeks of pregnancy. If you are more than 32 weeks pregnant, you can still have the vaccine but it may be less effective, especially after 38 weeks. As there is no whooping cough-only vaccine, the vaccine you will be given will also protect your baby against diphtheria and tetanus. The vaccine is called **ADACEL®**.

Please note that your baby will still need their routine vaccinations from eight weeks of age. Your health visitor will discuss this with you.

Is the whooping cough vaccine suitable for everyone?

Tell your midwife **before** you have the vaccine if you:

- are currently **less than 16 weeks pregnant**
- are feeling feverish and unwell
- are experiencing a high temperature (38°C or above)

We may advise you not to have the vaccine today if any of the above apply. We can rearrange your whooping cough vaccination appointment with you for another day.

Important information

The cap of the injection contains **latex**. If you have a latex allergy or are sensitive to latex, please let your midwife know. You will be offered an alternative form of the vaccine which also includes vaccination against poliomyelitis. Your midwife will discuss this with you.

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You must also tell your midwife **before** you have the vaccine if you:

- have a blood clotting disorder which causes excessive bleeding after injections
- have had the whooping cough vaccine already in this pregnancy
- have previously experienced:
 - a rare reaction called the 'Arthus reaction' (severe pain, swelling, or hardness at the injection site)
 - uncontrolled seizures or spasms
 - Guillain-Barré syndrome (a disease that affects your nerves and causes severe muscle weakness) within six weeks of a previous tetanus vaccine
 - any neurological (brain) complications after a previous vaccine of diphtheria, tetanus, or pertussis
 - an anaphylactic (severe and potentially life-threatening) allergic reaction to a previous vaccine of diphtheria, tetanus, or pertussis **or** to any of the ingredients in the ADACEL® vaccine (for a full list of the ingredients in the ADACEL® vaccine, please see the manufacturer's information leaflet here:

www.medicines.org.uk/emc/files/pil.15553.pdf or scan the QR code)



Having the vaccine **may not be appropriate** for you if any of the above apply. Please discuss this with your midwife.

Are there any side effects?

The whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine is very safe and serious side effects are rare.

The most common side effect is an injection site reaction. This may include pain, redness, and/or swelling at the injection site.

Other side effects include:

- a headache
- feeling tired
- stomach symptoms (for example, nausea, diarrhoea, stomach pain)
- a fever (a temperature of 38°C or above)
- aching muscles
- swollen lymph nodes
- sore and swollen joints

These side effects can be managed with paracetamol and will usually resolve within 72 hours.

Speak to your general practitioner (GP) or midwife if you have any concerns about side effects.

Useful links

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/667ad3fec7f64e234208ffbd/UKHSA_12961_Whooping_cough_pregnancy_leaflet_10_WEB.pdf

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