

Pointers For Parents & Expectant Parents

Help Protect Your New Baby's Health By Protecting Yourself

(NAPSA)—Newborns are not the only ones in the family who need to be immunized against diseases—most adults, especially new parents and their family members, do too.

That's the advice of doctors at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), who say adults and adolescents should speak with their health-care providers and make sure that they are up-to-date on all of their recommended vaccines. It's particularly important for those who have close contact with young infants to be vaccinated with the tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (Tdap) booster vaccine to help protect themselves and their infants against pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough.

While pertussis in adults and adolescents may take a milder form that is often mistaken for a cold or bronchitis—the disease is serious and can be deadly in infants. In fact, data indicate that 90 percent of reported pertussis deaths have occurred in infants younger than four months of age.

Sadly, when a source could be identified, about 50 percent of babies diagnosed with pertussis had contracted the disease from their parents. The Hispanic population—which is the fastest growing and largest minority in the U.S.—is particularly hit hard by pertussis. Hispanic babies may be at higher risk for contracting pertussis, and the risk of dying from pertussis may be higher in Hispanic infants than in non-Hispanic infants.

"I didn't know how serious pertussis could be for an infant," says actress and singer, Jennifer Lopez. "When I learned that I could help protect myself from contracting pertussis and reduce the chance of spreading the disease to my babies simply by getting myself vaccinated with a Tdap booster vaccina-



The CDC recommends new parents get a booster vaccination for whooping cough.

tion, I didn't hesitate."

Lopez, a mother of twins, is working with the March of Dimes and Sanofi Pasteur on a new national pertussis education campaign, "Sounds of Pertussis."

This campaign focuses on educating new and expectant parents about the dangers of pertussis and how they can prevent the spread of the disease by getting vaccinated with a Tdap booster.

While most adults were likely vaccinated against the disease during childhood, immunity against pertussis wears off over time, in about 5-10 years, leaving them susceptible to getting and spreading the disease.

"Despite the CDC recommendations published in December 2006, only two percent of all adults 18-64 years of age had ever received the Tdap vaccine," says Dr. Alan R. Fleischman, senior vice president and medical director for the March of Dimes. "With an estimated 800,000 to 3.3 million people getting pertussis every year, it's vital that we start turning those numbers around to help protect adults and infants."

Talk to your health-care provider or visit www.SoundsofPertussis.com for more information.