



# Health Awareness

## Surprising Facts About Helping Protect Infants And Adults From Whooping Cough

(NAPSA)—Did you know you could be putting your child at risk for contracting a serious, potentially fatal disease?

Pertussis, more commonly known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious disease caused by bacteria, which can spread through the air when someone coughs, sneezes or even talks up close. In adults, symptoms are usually mild and are often mistaken for the common cold or even bronchitis. However, in infants, pertussis causes severe coughing and can be characterized by the unforgettable “whoop” sound made when a person is gasping for breath after a coughing fit.

Four-time NASCAR Sprint Cup Series champion Jeff Gordon and his wife, model Ingrid Vandebosch, are working with the March of Dimes and Sanofi Pasteur on the Sounds of Pertussis national education campaign, which raises awareness about pertussis and the importance of adult Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis) booster vaccinations.

“Even though Ingrid and I have a 3-year-old daughter, Ella, we had no idea we needed an adult pertussis booster and that, without it we were putting her at risk,” said Gordon. “With our new baby boy, we weren’t taking any chances—we got vaccinated. I rolled up my sleeve earlier this year and Ingrid got her immunization shortly after Leo was born.”

Pertussis can make it difficult to eat, drink and breathe and violent coughing causes shortness of breath and may make infants turn blue. Pertussis can also lead



**The roar of an engine before a big race may be music to four-time NASCAR Sprint Cup Series champion Jeff Gordon’s ears, but the sound of a child with whooping cough is one sound he hopes to never hear.**

to serious complications such as pneumonia and even death in infants. In recent years, about 92 percent of pertussis deaths have occurred in infants younger than 12 months old.

“What many people don’t know is that babies are most likely to catch the disease from a member of their own family, primarily their own parents. That’s why it is highly recommended that people around young infants get vaccinated against pertussis,” said Alan R. Fleischman, M.D., senior vice president and medical director for the March of Dimes.

### **Pertussis On The Rise**

The need for more education, awareness and action is underscored by a resurgence of pertussis nationwide. The number of

pertussis cases reported to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in recent years has been dramatically higher than in the past.

This year, California has declared an epidemic of pertussis in the state and other states, such as Michigan, South Carolina and Texas, are reporting significant rises in the amount of cases reported from this year compared to last.

### **For More Information**

The campaign encourages parents to get vaccinated against pertussis with the adult pertussis vaccine and to spread the word to their friends and families about pertussis prevention to help keep themselves and the babies in their lives safe from pertussis.

Caregivers can learn more about the disease, hear the sound of pertussis, and watch a video to post to your Facebook page by visiting [www.SoundsofPertussis.com](http://www.SoundsofPertussis.com). Families who have been directly impacted by pertussis are also encouraged to visit the website and share their experience.

You can also make a difference in the fight against pertussis by downloading a song from the Sounds Track 4 Change™. This is a playlist of Jeff Gordon’s favorite road tunes—5 percent of the proceeds from every song purchased will be donated to the March of Dimes for pertussis education.

For more information about pertussis, visit [www.SoundsofPertussis.com](http://www.SoundsofPertussis.com)



\* Standard messaging charges may apply.