

# Children's Health

## Take A Shot At Silencing The Sounds Of Whooping Cough

(NAPSA)—New parents know to vaccinate their babies to protect against a number of childhood diseases. But what about vaccinating themselves to keep from spreading illnesses to their child?

Most parents do not think of whooping cough, also known as pertussis, when they think of potential threats to their child's health. However, this disease is making a strong comeback in the U.S.—with more than 25,000 reported cases in 2004 alone.

Luckily, there is a simple way to ease new parents' minds: immunize mom and dad with the whooping cough booster.

Because of the growth of this disturbing trend, new mom and award-winning actress Keri Russell is teaming up with the nonprofit organization Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases (PKIDs) to launch a new public awareness campaign, Silence the Sounds of Pertussis. The initiative aims to educate new parents about the dangers of this disease (especially to babies) and encourage them to get the Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis booster (called the Tdap vaccine) to keep their baby safe.

A recent study out of the University of North Carolina found that parents are the source of more than 50 percent of infant cases of whooping cough.

"When I found out that parents were infecting their children with this dangerous disease, I asked my doctor what I could do to prevent it from happening to my new son," Keri Russell said. "He recommended that my husband and I get the Tdap booster."

The Tdap is strongly recommended by the CDC for anyone who has close contact with a baby.

In adults, whooping cough symptoms often disguise them-



**A campaign says parents should be vaccinated against whooping cough to protect newborns from the illness.**

selves to look like a common cold, making the disease difficult to diagnose and easy to spread.

Babies under 12 months of age are not only the most vulnerable to whooping cough, they are also the age group for which the infection is most life threatening. Babies too young to have completed their primary vaccine series account for the majority of pertussis-related complications, hospitalizations and deaths. In fact, more than 90 percent of pertussis-associated deaths were among babies less than 6 months old.

"The good news is that whooping cough is a problem that has a solution," said Dr. Gary Freed, Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Michigan Medical School. "If every new and expectant parent receives the Tdap booster before or immediately after the birth of their baby, we could really reduce the risk of young babies getting whooping cough. If you provide care for a baby, talk to your doctor about how to protect him or her from pertussis."

For more information on how you can help Silence the Sounds of Pertussis, visit [www.pkids.org](http://www.pkids.org).