

Your important health information

The importance of immunisation

Immunisation

- Can protect you, your unborn baby and your newborn against some infectious diseases. These diseases can cause serious harm to you and your baby.
- Teaches your body's natural defences to build resistance to specific infections.

Before pregnancy

Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR, which includes German measles)

- Rubella infection during pregnancy can cause serious birth defects.
- It is important to check your rubella immunity before each pregnancy.
- It is recommended you wait four weeks after receiving the vaccine before trying to get pregnant and not have the vaccine if you are already pregnant.

Pertussis (whooping cough)

- Babies younger than six months or who have not yet received their third set of infant immunisations are at most risk of serious disease and death from whooping cough.
- The same vaccine (Boostrix) also protects against diphtheria and tetanus.

Varicella (chickenpox)

- Chickenpox infection in pregnancy can cause severe illness in you and your unborn baby.
- If you cannot remember if you have had chickenpox, a blood test will show if you need to be immunised. Ask your GP.
- It is recommended you wait four weeks after receiving the vaccine before trying to get pregnant.

During pregnancy

Influenza (flu)

- Pregnant women are at increased risk of getting the flu.
- Flu is a serious disease and pregnant women are more likely to have serious complications.
- Flu immunisation is recommended for pregnant women.

Pertussis (whooping cough)

- Vaccinating against whooping cough during pregnancy boosts your immune system to protect your baby during the first months after birth.
- A Boostrix vaccine is currently recommended during the third trimester, even if you have had one before pregnancy.
- The same vaccine (Boostrix) also protects against diphtheria and tetanus.

After pregnancy

- If you did not receive these vaccines before or during pregnancy, it is important to have them soon after your baby has been born. This will help protect your newborn baby by “cocooning”. Cocooning against infections means protecting newborn babies by vaccinating those who have close contact with them.
- A Boostrix vaccination to prevent whooping cough is still valuable after pregnancy (if you have not had one in the last 10 years).

What about breastfeeding?

- All the vaccines listed here are safe for you to have while you are breastfeeding.

What about fathers, grandparents, children and others who care for my baby?

- Immunising parents, grandparents and carers reduces the chance of passing whooping cough on to newborn babies. This will help protect your newborn baby by “cocooning”.
- Boostrix vaccine every 10 years and flu vaccination yearly is recommended for all people who care for your baby.
- It is safe for them to have these vaccines while you are pregnant.
- Checking immunisation is up to date for all children in your family will also help protect your newborn baby.
- Please see your GP to discuss immunisation.

What about my baby?

- All babies should be immunised as recommended by the National Immunisation Program which starts at birth.

Helpful link

<http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/pregnant-women>.

Further Information:

Contact your GP, obstetrician or midwife to learn more.

Online resources include the Immunise Australia Program

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