

## Is the whooping cough vaccination for pregnant women effective?

Vaccination during pregnancy is effective to prevent whooping cough in children. It prevents about 90% of hospital admissions and 95% of deaths associated with this infection in children less than 3 months old.

## Is the vaccine safe?

The whooping cough vaccine is considered safe for the mother and her unborn child. Millions of doses have been administered. No notable problems for mother or fetus have been detected. No link has been found between vaccination against whooping cough and premature delivery or any other complications during pregnancy or defects in the unborn baby.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Get more information from your CLSC or your doctor during your next visit. Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect your unborn child against whooping cough.

[Québec.ca/vaccination](https://quebec.ca/vaccination)



Vaccination,  
the best protection

# Whooping cough vaccination for pregnant women



## Addition of the whooping cough vaccine to the regular immunization schedule for pregnant women

Since May 2018, Québec experts recommend adding the whooping cough vaccine to the regular immunization schedule for pregnant women. The ideal time to get vaccinated is between the 26<sup>th</sup> and the 32<sup>nd</sup> week of pregnancy. Vaccination is recommended during each pregnancy.

## Why vaccinate pregnant women against whooping cough?

Babies are given their first dose of whooping cough vaccine when they are 2 months old and several doses are needed to ensure lasting protection. This means that infants are not protected during the critical period of the first few months of life. Getting the whooping cough vaccine during pregnancy allows antibodies to be transferred directly to the baby across the placenta, protecting the baby from birth until it is old enough to get its own vaccine.

## What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough is a highly contagious disease that is characterized by violent coughing fits. It is caused by a bacterium that spreads through droplets projected into the air by someone with the disease, for example, when they cough or sneeze.

## What are the symptoms and complications of whooping cough?

In general, whooping cough begins with the following symptoms: light fever, runny nose, red, watery eyes and coughing. Sometimes, the sufferer may then vomit or stop breathing for a few seconds after a fit of coughing. The illness is most serious in babies younger than 1 year. In babies less than 1 year old, the cough may be mild or absent. Sometimes, the main symptom is apnea, which is temporary cessation of breathing.

Possible complications of whooping cough include pneumonia, rib fractures or hernias. Whooping cough can also cause brain damage, or even death in some cases.

The risk of complications, hospital admission or death caused by whooping cough is higher in babies less than 1 year old.

## What is the whooping cough vaccine?

The whooping cough vaccine is a combined vaccine, meaning that it protects against several diseases at the same time. The vaccine used for pregnant women vaccination protects against diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus. It contains no live bacteria or viruses.

## Who should receive the vaccine?

The immunization schedule recommends administering the whooping cough vaccine to babies from 2 months of age and to all pregnant women during each pregnancy.

In Québec,  
between 240 and 1600 cases  
of whooping cough are reported each year.