

Few hospital websites educate pregnant women on Tdap vaccination and whooping cough prevention

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Whooping cough, a highly contagious bacterial infection, can be serious and even fatal in newborns, but less than half of birthing hospitals in Michigan included prevention information on websites, says a new University of Michigan analysis that appears in the *American Journal of Infection Control*.

The majority of Michigan birthing hospitals (64%) had no information about Tdap vaccination to prevent whooping cough in babies; among those that did have information, it typically required searching for the term [pertussis](#) or whooping cough.

"Newborns are too young to be vaccinated themselves, and many parents don't realize the importance of Tdap vaccination during pregnancy in protecting their babies from a preventable and potentially deadly disease," says lead author Sarah Clark, M.P.H., associate research scientist in the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics and Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Unit and associate director of the National Poll on Children's Health.

"Rather than burying information about infant pertussis prevention in archived pages, birthing hospitals should identify a prominent location to provide specific information about the importance of Tdap vaccination for pregnant women, family members, and others who will be in close contact with a newborn. The goal is to reach those who might otherwise not be aware of the need for vaccination."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends Tdap vaccination of pregnant women between the 27th and 36th week of each pregnancy, to ensure that antibodies are transferred from mom to infant. Vaccination of family members further protects infants during the time they are too young to receive their own Tdap vaccinations.

The Tdap shot is a combination vaccine that protects against serious bacteria-causing diseases diphtheria, tetanus, and whooping cough (pertussis).

The authors note that the birth of a child may especially be a prime time when parents and family members are on websites seeking information about preparing for the labor and delivery stay, hospital visiting hours or

other policies.

"The newborn period is a teachable moment when families seek guidance on how to keep their baby healthy, and our findings indicate that too many hospitals are missing this opportunity to share critical health education," Clark says. "Birthing hospitals should play a role in educating expectant parents about whooping cough prevention, but there's work to do to make sure that information is easily accessible."

More information: "Infant Pertussis Prevention Information on Websites of Michigan Birthing Hospitals," *American Journal of Infection Control*, doi.org/10.1016/j.ajic.2014.08.004

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