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## Obstetricians part of the solution for reducing neonatal pertussis

- There is currently a national outbreak of pertussis, which can cause serious illness and fatalities in babies.
- Obstetricians have an important role in encouraging pregnant women to protect their babies through maternal pertussis vaccination with Tdap Boostrix.
- Maternal immunisation is proven to be effective in reducing pertussis morbidity and mortality in babies. This vaccination is safe and free for all pregnant women at 28-38 weeks.
- Currently only one third of all women in Auckland are receiving this important vaccine.
- Please take every opportunity to encourage maternal vaccination for each pregnancy.

There is currently a pertussis (whooping cough) outbreak around the country and babies under one year are the most vulnerable. Around 70 percent of babies with pertussis are hospitalised, and paediatricians are seeing babies in intensive care units with this severe illness. Maternal immunisation is proven to be effective in reducing pertussis morbidity and mortality in babies.

Obstetricians are part of the solution for reducing neonatal pertussis rates. You can help raise awareness about the importance of maternal vaccination with pregnant women by encouraging them to visit their GP or authorised vaccinator at 28 weeks to get immunised. The vaccine is free for all pregnant women between 28-38 weeks.

Pertussis boosting is recommended for every pregnancy. This is important because it boosts the woman's antibodies which cross the placenta into her baby's bloodstream during each pregnancy.

From a recent audit it is apparent that only one-third of all pregnant women in Auckland are receiving this important vaccination, with Maori and Pacific women well below the average rate.

Lack of patient awareness for this vaccine and the absence of a clear recommendation from a trusted health professional were cited as important reasons why women are not immunised according to a recent Christchurch study\*.

Local and international studies have shown the maternal vaccination to be safe and effective at protecting newborn infants from pertussis (vaccine efficacies of 91-93%). See links below:

[Safety of Tdap vaccine in pregnant women: an observational study](#)

[Safety of pertussis vaccination in pregnant women in the UK: an observational study](#)

[A study to estimate the effectiveness of maternal pertussis vaccination in protecting babies](#)

Free pertussis resources aimed at pregnant women and mothers are available for your waiting room:

Protecting baby starts in pregnancy poster [here](#).

Immunise against whooping cough brochure [here](#).

Doctors at Auckland Regional Public Health Service have written an article investigating the uptake of maternal pertussis vaccination, find out more [here](#).

\*Factors influencing women's decisions about having the Pertussis vaccine during pregnancy by L. Hill.