

## **Diphtheria (reduced dose), tetanus & acellular pertussis (reduced dose) vaccine (dT<sub>ap</sub> vaccine)**

### **Pertussis**

Pertussis, also known as “whooping cough”, is an acute respiratory illness caused by bacteria. It is spread by direct contact with droplets from patients. The infected person may initially have non-specific symptoms like runny nose, sneezing, low grade fever and mild cough. The cough gradually becomes more severe and spells of violent coughing can interfere with eating, drinking and breathing. The symptoms can last for weeks. Complications of Pertussis include lung infection, seizures and brain damage.

### **How are babies infected with pertussis?**

Babies usually contract pertussis via direct contact with or droplet transmission from their infected caregivers who may initially have non-specific symptoms like runny nose, sneezing, low-grade fever and mild cough.

### **Diphtheria (reduced dose), tetanus & acellular pertussis (reduced dose) vaccine (dT<sub>ap</sub> vaccine)**

#### ***A. Why are pregnant women advised to receive the pertussis vaccine?***

Infants only begin their vaccination against pertussis at 2 months of age. The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (SCVPD) under the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health recommends that pregnant women should receive one dose of acellular pertussis-containing vaccine during each pregnancy. Diphtheria (reduced dose), tetanus and acellular pertussis (reduced dose) (dT<sub>ap</sub>) vaccine is recommended. The antibodies produced can be passed to the foetus before birth for direct protection against pertussis in the first few months of life when the infant has not yet completed his/her own vaccination.

***B. When should pregnant women get vaccinated?***

The vaccine should be given preferably at least 15 days before delivery, so that enough time is allowed for antibodies to develop in pregnant women, and passage of enough antibodies to the foetus before delivery for optimal protection. The antenatal clinics of Hospital Authority and Maternal and Child Health Centres of Department of Health will provide pertussis vaccination for pregnant women from 26 to 34 week of pregnancy.

***C. The following individuals should NOT receive dT<sub>ap</sub> vaccine***

- Had a severe allergic reaction to any vaccine component (including antibiotics or preservatives)
- Had a severe allergic reaction after a previous dose of pertussis-containing vaccine
- Developed encephalopathy (e.g., coma, decreased level of consciousness, prolonged seizures) not attributable to another identifiable cause within 7 days of administration of a previous dose of pertussis-containing vaccine

***D. What are the side effects?***

- Minor side effects include local reactions (such as pain, redness or swelling) which are mild and only last a few days
- Serious side effects are extremely rare
- Scientific evidence has shown that pertussis vaccines are very safe for the pregnant women and their babies

***If you have any query, please contact the Hospital Authority Antenatal Clinic and Maternal & Child Health Centre of the Department of Health.***