

Scottish Vaccination and Immunisation Programme

Change to the maternal pertussis vaccination programme from 1 July 2024: key messages

Background on change

- The pertussis vaccine is offered to pregnant women to help protect their baby against pertussis (also known as whooping cough).
- The whooping cough vaccine was previously offered as a four-in-one vaccine, as there's no single vaccine available, and this included protection against whooping cough, diphtheria, tetanus and polio.
 - It is standard international practice to offer combined vaccines to pregnant women.
- From 1 July 2024, the whooping cough vaccine will be offered as a three-in-one vaccine, as polio will no longer be included.
- This change is a result of latest evidence that shows children are better protected from polio when receiving the vaccine during their routine childhood immunisations, which is given as part of the combined six-in-one vaccination protecting against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, Hib and HepB from 8 weeks old.
- The likelihood of contracting polio in the UK is very low. The last case of polio acquired in the UK was in 1984.

Getting vaccinated

- An increase in pertussis (whooping cough) cases is being seen across the UK and Europe.
 - Cases of whooping cough have been increasing in Scotland since late 2023.
 - Cases of whooping cough are likely to increase/circulate at high levels into the autumn.
 - Cases are currently being reported on a weekly basis (every Thursday at 09:30) on the [PHS website](#)

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- Whooping cough activity regularly peaks every 3 to 5 years.
- All pregnant women are eligible for the whooping cough vaccine from week 16 of their pregnancy.
- The ideal time to have the vaccine is between weeks 16 and 32 as this allows enough time for your body to make antibodies that are then passed to your baby.
- The vaccine can still be given after 32 weeks, but it won't offer your baby the same level of protection.
- Getting immunised during pregnancy will help protect your baby in the first few vulnerable weeks of life until they're old enough to have the routine immunisation at 8 weeks of age (given as part of the '6-in-1' vaccine).
- There is no other way to protect your baby from whooping cough in the first few weeks of their life, when they are too young to get vaccinated and are at greatest risk.
- Young babies with whooping cough often become very unwell and most will be admitted to hospital – if particularly severe, they can die.
- Pregnant women can help protect their babies by getting vaccinated. The protection you receive from vaccination will also lower your own risk of whooping cough infection and the risk of passing whooping cough to your baby.
- The whooping cough vaccine is recommended every time you're pregnant, even if you've had the vaccine before.
- Pregnant women are encouraged to speak to their midwife as soon as possible about getting their whooping cough vaccination.
- For more information about vaccines in pregnancy, visit NHS Inform: www.nhsinform.scot/pregnancyandbabyvaccines

Safety of the whooping cough vaccine

- Immunising pregnant women is effective at reducing the number of babies getting whooping cough. The four-in-one vaccine has been routinely offered to pregnant women in Scotland since 2012.

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- The whooping cough vaccine is not a live vaccine and it cannot cause whooping cough in women or their babies.
- The whooping cough vaccine has been used extensively in pregnant women in the UK since October 2012, and a [MHRA's study of around 20,000 vaccinated women published in the British Medical Journal \(BMJ\)](#) found no safety concerns.
- The vaccine is around 92% effective in preventing serious illness and death from whooping cough in infants.
- A UKHSA review of vaccination in pregnancy to prevent whooping cough in early infancy, published in 2018, found safety studies covering more than 150,000 vaccinated women provide reassurance of no increased risk of problems in mothers or babies.
- The new three-in-one whooping cough vaccine is not suitable for women with a severe allergy to latex and the previously used four-in-one vaccine will be offered in its place.
 - The tip caps of the prefilled Adacel vaccine contain a natural rubber latex derivative, which may cause allergic reactions in individuals with a severe allergy to latex.

Vaccine uptake data

- Data regarding uptake of pertussis vaccination in pregnancy are held within the individual NHS Health Boards. It is hoped that this will be available nationally very shortly.
- Provisional NHS board data shows some regional variations in uptake during the last year, ranging from 73% to 95%. On the whole coverage is good across Scotland when compared with many other countries.

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