

# Children's Health

## Protecting Children From The Dangers Of Pertussis

(NAPSA)—Among diseases that can be prevented by vaccines, pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough, is one of the most commonly occurring in the U.S.—and infants are especially vulnerable.

Whooping cough is a highly contagious and potentially deadly bacterial infection that can strike at any age but is particularly dangerous for babies.

In the first year of life, infants are more likely to suffer from pertussis and pertussis-related deaths than older age groups. In fact, babies younger than 1 year old account for nearly one-quarter of the cases and 92 percent of the deaths from pertussis in the U.S. Complications can include pneumonia and brain damage.

One such victim was Gabrielle Romaguera, a perfectly healthy baby at birth. Less than a month later, she developed a severe cough, which became so violent she turned blue from lack of oxygen.

Gabrielle was treated for several weeks in the hospital. However, the damage caused by pertussis was too severe and eventually took her life. She was only 52 days old when she passed away—just seven days short of her first scheduled pertussis vaccine (DTaP).

Five doses of the DTaP vaccine are given to children to fully protect them against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis at 2 months of age, 4 months, 6 months, between 15 and 18 months and then between 4 and 6 years. To be fully protected, children need all five doses, say the experts at Every Child By Two.

To further safeguard infants, the adults around them should be up to date on their vaccinations. Transmission by adults who are not vaccinated themselves is



**To be fully protected from pertussis, also known as whooping cough, newborns depend on parents and caregivers to vaccinate themselves.**

responsible for many cases among babies. In fact, half of babies with pertussis are infected by their parents.

That's why it's so important for parents, family members and caregivers to talk to their doctor about getting the Tdap vaccine, which prevents tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis in adolescents and adults. Vaccinating the people around them creates a "cocooning effect" for babies and young children, who are the most vulnerable to pertussis.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends routine vaccination for those considering pregnancy and for new mothers, both to provide personal protection and to reduce the risk of transmitting pertussis to their infants.

Families should also proactively inquire about the vaccination status of health care workers coming in contact with their newborns.

For more information, visit [www.VaccinateYourBaby.org](http://www.VaccinateYourBaby.org).