

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a highly communicable bacterial illness which can be prevented with vaccination. Previous immunization against pertussis or a history of natural pertussis infection does not provide lifelong immunity. There is no routine antibody testing available to determine immune status to pertussis.

According to the Canadian Immunization Guide, all adult health care workers (age 18 years or older), regardless of age, should receive a single dose of tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis vaccine (Tdap) for pertussis protection if not previously received in adulthood, **even if not due for a booster**. The adult dose is in addition to the routine adolescent booster dose. The interval between the last tetanus-diphtheria booster and the Tdap vaccine does not matter.

Learners under age 18 years at program start are required to document an adolescent Tdap given age 14-17 years on their Year One Health Screening Record; a booster dose of Tdap will be required on or after the 18th birthday.

Adverse reactions to Tdap vaccine are less common in adults than adolescents; the interval between a previous tetanus-containing vaccine and a Tdap vaccine does not affect the rate of injection site or systemic adverse events. If a learner mistakenly receives a dose of Td when they should have received Tdap, the missing Tdap vaccine should be given as soon as possible, even if it is the same day.

Immunization with Tdap is safe and effective in pregnant women and allows for high levels of antibody in newborns during the first two months of life. The Canadian Immunization Guide recommends vaccination between 27 and 32 weeks gestation in every pregnancy.

**NOTE:** This is a mandatory requirement for learners in Health Professional/Non-Professional Programs at McMaster. An exemption will only be allowed for medical reasons, in which case a note from a physician must be submitted. International learners who are unable to access the vaccine in their home country must receive the vaccine in Canada before they may attend a clinical placement.

**For more information:**

[Immunization of Workers: Canadian Immunization Guide](#)

[Pertussis Vaccines: Canadian Immunization Guide](#)

[Pertussis Archives: Immunize.org](#)

**Questions?** Contact the Health Screening Office: hrsadmin@mcmaster.ca, 905-525-9140 ext 22249