

“Sounds of Pertussis” Campaign Fact Sheet

- The “Sounds of Pertussis” is a national education campaign to raise awareness about the threat that pertussis, also known as whooping cough, can pose to infants, and that all new parents should get an adult pertussis vaccine. A joint initiative of the March of Dimes and sanofi pasteur, the campaign features actress, singer, and mother, Jennifer Lopez, and Alan R. Fleischman, M.D., medical director of the March of Dimes, as its primary spokespeople.
- Pertussis, more commonly known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory disease characterized by severe coughing. The disease is named after the “whoop” sound commonly demonstrated by children who try to breathe in after a severe coughing spell. Pertussis is particularly dangerous for babies who have not yet been fully vaccinated against the disease, and face the possibility of serious complications, including death.
- There is an urgent need for more education about pertussis prevention because parents don’t realize that they can get pertussis and transmit the disease to unprotected infants. When a source of an infant’s pertussis was identified, parents were responsible for transmitting the disease about half the time.
- Jennifer Lopez is participating in the “Sounds of Pertussis” campaign to help let parents, and others in close contact with infants, know how important it is that they get vaccinated with a tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine. Getting vaccinated with the Tdap vaccine is a simple step that parents and others in close contact with infants can take to help protect themselves from getting pertussis and unknowingly spreading the disease to the babies in their lives. But, many people just don’t know about it.
- The Tdap vaccine boosts immunity against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis among adults and adolescents. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that anyone 11 through 64 years of age, especially those in close contact with an infant, should protect themselves by receiving the Tdap vaccine.
- The campaign will seek to educate the public through a variety of mediums, including print, broadcast, and online.
 - At the heart of the campaign are English and Spanish television and radio public service announcements (PSAs), scheduled to begin airing in April 2009, a four-part Spanish radio novela, and print and online materials for parents/consumers.
 - Information and campaign materials can be found on the SoundsofPertussis.com Web site.

- As part of the “Sounds of Pertussis” campaign, sanofi pasteur will serve as a primary sponsor for the March of Dimes March for Babies walks in 2009.
 - Ms. Lopez will serve as Honorary Chairperson for the March this year.
 - March for Babies takes place the weekend of April 25-26 in more than 900 communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.
 - Money raised by March for Babies supports community programs that help moms have healthy, full-term pregnancies, funds research to help babies begin healthy lives, and provides information and comfort to families of babies in newborn intensive care.
 - “Sounds of Pertussis” booths will be stationed at walks in 25 major cities to help raise awareness of pertussis disease and prevention. These booths will offer information and giveaways to walk participants, as well as continuously show the new PSA. Information about the walks can be found at www.marchforbabies.org.
- The campaign will have a particular focus on Spanish-speaking audiences, as the Hispanic population in the U.S. is particularly hit hard by pertussis. Hispanic babies may be at higher risk for contracting pertussis and the risk of dying from pertussis may be higher in Hispanic infants than in non-Hispanic infants.
- March of Dimes and sanofi pasteur are working together on “Sounds of Pertussis” to help protect the health and wellness of adults and infants. For additional information about pertussis, Tdap immunization, and the relationship between sanofi pasteur and the March of Dimes, please visit www.soundsofpertussis.com.