

## PERTUSSIS

# Katie and Craig Van Tornhout

## How Pertussis Changed Our Lives



On December 24, 2009 I gave birth to a feisty 4lb 5oz baby girl named Callie.

She was our “miracle” baby after 5 years of trying and 4 miscarriages. She came 6 weeks early due to pre-eclampsia and spent 12 days in the neonatal intensive care unit. She came home and she thrived. She was happy, and gaining weight. She was the PERFECT baby. On January 24 we noticed she had a small cough. On Monday I took her to the doctor and they told me it was “just a cough” and would be gone in a few days. Tuesday, she was more tired than usual. Wednesday she was lethargic and wasn’t eating. We went back to the doctor and while waiting, she stopped breathing in my arms. She came back on her own, but we were rushed to the emergency department and admitted into the pediatric intensive care unit. It wasn’t until Friday that they tested for Meningitis and Pertussis (whooping cough). At 11:00 pm after a respiratory therapy session, her condition worsened. At 1:17 am she was GONE. It wasn’t until Monday, February 1 that we learned she passed from Pertussis. February 1 was her original due date...the same date as her viewing.

We keep Callie’s spirit alive by educating others about pertussis and the importance of the DTaP vaccine for infants and young children and the Tdap vaccine for pregnant women, adolescents and adult family members.

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Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory disease. It is caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*. Babies can contract the disease from family members or others who don’t know they have the disease. Whooping Cough or Pertussis is spread easily through the air when the infected person coughs or sneezes. Pregnant women who are infected can also transmit the disease to their unborn baby.

Pertussis is known for uncontrollable, violent coughing which often makes it hard to breathe. After fits of many coughs, someone with pertussis often needs to take deep breathes which result in a “whooping” sound. Pertussis most commonly affects infants and young children and can be fatal, especially in babies less than 1 year of age.

Last year, there were 29,000 cases of pertussis in the United States and about 700 cases in Indiana.

The best way to protect against pertussis is to be vaccinated with the DTaP or Tdap vaccine which protects against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. Pregnant women should be vaccinated in their third trimester to protect their newborns. All family members should receive the vaccine to protect the newborn baby. Infants should receive the vaccine at 2 months of age with five doses given up to 6 years of age.

**Ask your doctor about the DTaP or Tdap vaccine.**

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

