

ROTAVIRUS VACCINE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

1 What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a virus (germ) that causes severe diarrhea, often with vomiting. Rotavirus affects mostly babies and young children.



Rotavirus is not the only cause of severe diarrhea, but it is the most common. Rotavirus infection strikes most children by the time they are 3 years old. In the United States, over 500,000 of these children are taken to a doctor or emergency

room every year and about 50,000 are hospitalized. About 20 children a year die from rotavirus diarrhea in the U.S. The disease usually occurs between November and May, depending on the part of the country.

Your child can get rotavirus infection by being around children who are already infected.

2 Rotavirus vaccine

A vaccine has been developed that helps protect children against rotavirus infection. This vaccine is swallowed, not given as a shot.

Rotavirus vaccine will not prevent all cases of diarrhea or vomiting – only those caused by rotavirus. There are many other causes of diarrhea.

About 50% - 70% of children who get rotavirus vaccine will not get rotavirus diarrhea at all. But more important, about 70% - 90% of vaccinated children will not get *severe* rotavirus diarrhea, even if they get a mild case. Vaccinated children are much less likely to go to the doctor or hospital than unvaccinated children who get the disease.

3 Who should get rotavirus vaccine and when?

Children should get 3 doses of rotavirus vaccine:

- ✓ One dose at 2 months of age
- ✓ One dose at 4 months of age
- ✓ One dose at 6 months of age

Catch-up: If your child misses a dose or gets behind schedule, get the next dose as soon as you can. There is no need to start over.

However, children should not get rotavirus vaccine after their first birthday. A child who has not gotten the *first* dose by 7 months of age should not get the vaccine.

NOTE: Children who are born during the summer or fall may need to get rotavirus vaccine at slightly younger ages than usual to be sure they are protected during the winter rotavirus season. Your doctor or nurse can give you details.

Rotavirus vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

4 Some babies should not get rotavirus vaccine or should wait

- Babies who have passed their first birthday should not get rotavirus vaccine.
- Babies 7 months of age or older *who have not gotten at least one dose of rotavirus vaccine* should not get the vaccine.
- Babies who have ever had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose of rotavirus vaccine should not get another dose. Babies who have ever had a serious allergic reaction to certain antibiotics, or to monosodium glutamate, should not get the vaccine.

- Babies with certain diseases of the stomach or intestines should not get rotavirus vaccine.
- Rotavirus vaccine is usually not recommended for babies with ongoing diarrhea, because it might not work as well.
- For babies who are unable to fight serious infections because of
 - HIV/AIDS, or any other disease that affects the immune system
 - treatment with drugs such as long-term steroids
 - any kind of cancer
 - cancer treatment with x-rays or drugs,
 check with their doctor about whether they should get rotavirus vaccine.
- Babies who are moderately or severely ill at the time the vaccination is scheduled should usually wait until they recover before getting rotavirus vaccine.

Ask your doctor or nurse for details.

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What are the risks from rotavirus vaccine?

A vaccine, like any medicine, is capable of causing serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of a vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.

In studies that have been done so far rotavirus vaccine has been associated only with mild problems. The risk from rotavirus vaccine is much smaller than the risk from the disease.

Most babies who get rotavirus vaccine do not have any problems with it.

Mild problems

- mild fever (over 100°F): up to 15% of children getting the vaccine
- moderate fever (over 102°F): about 1% of children getting the vaccine
- less appetite, tiredness, fussiness

If these problems happen, it is usually 3-5 days after vaccination.

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What if there is a moderate or severe reaction?

What should I look for?

Any unusual condition, such as a high fever or behavior changes. Signs of a serious allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, hoarseness or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, a fast heart beat or dizziness, occurring within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination. A high fever or seizure, should it occur, would be within a week after the vaccination.

What should I do?

- Call a doctor, or get the baby to a doctor right away.
- Tell your doctor what happened, the date and time it happened, and when the vaccination was given.
- Ask your doctor, nurse, or health department to file a Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) form, or call VAERS yourself at **1-800-822-7967**.

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How can I learn more?

- Ask your doctor or nurse. They can give you the vaccine package insert or suggest other sources of information.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
 - Call **1-800-232-2522** (English)
 - Call **1-800-232-0233** (Español)
 - Visit the National Immunization Program's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/nip>



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Immunization Program