

Rotavirus (Rotarix®) Vaccine

Fact Sheet

The rotavirus vaccine, Rotarix®, is an **oral** vaccine that helps to protect children from 5 types of rotaviruses.

What is Rotavirus?

- Rotavirus is the most common cause of diarrhea in infants and children.
- Symptoms can range from mild stomach upset to fever, vomiting and diarrhea, which can result in severe dehydration requiring hospitalization.
- Children under 2 years of age are most likely to have severe complications.
- Rotavirus spreads by touching something that an infected person has touched, like a shared toy; by eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water; or through coughing or sneezing.
- After exposure to the virus, it takes 1 to 3 days for symptoms to appear, symptoms can last for 3 to 8 days.

Who should get the publicly funded (free) rotavirus vaccine?

- All infants starting at 6 weeks of age and up to 24 weeks of age should receive the vaccine.
- It is given in two doses, at least 4 weeks apart, with the first dose usually given at the 2 month immunization visit and the second dose at the 4 month visit.
- The first dose should be given before 15 weeks of age, but if Rotarix is administered at ≥15 weeks of age, the rest of the series should be completed with a minimum of 4 weeks between each dose and all doses should be administered at ≤25 weeks and no later than 32 weeks of age.

Who should not get the oral rotavirus vaccine?

- Infants who have had a serious allergic reaction to this vaccine, or to any component of the vaccine:
 - **Rotarix™** - human rotavirus RIX4414 strain (live, attenuated), Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium (DMEM), sucrose, di-sodium adipate, and residual porcine circovirus type 1 (PCV-1)
May contain latex.
- Infants with a gastrointestinal or digestive illness / malformation, or a problem in the past with folding of the intestines that caused a blockage, known as intussusception.
- Infants who
 - have recently received blood products
 - have an impaired immune response / on medication that lowers the body's ability to fight infections, e.g. infant's mother treated with monoclonal antibodies (MAB) while pregnant—examples Rituxan for non-Hodgkin Lymphoma; Actemra for Rheumatoid Arthritis
- If your infant has a high fever, serious infection worse than a cold, diarrhea or vomiting, you should postpone immunization until they feel better.
- If your infant has already received a different rotavirus vaccine, such as RotaTeq®, they should complete the series with it, if possible.
- If any dose in the series was Rota Teq, a total of 3 doses should be given.

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What are the common side effects of the oral rotavirus vaccine?

- Occasionally, some infants may have diarrhea, loss of appetite, irritability, gas, fever and / or a rash.
- If your child becomes ill with vomiting, abdominal pain or blood in their bowel movement, seek medical attention right away.
- Tylenol® or ibuprofen may be taken afterwards, as directed, to reduce discomfort.
- **Children under 19 years of age must not be given ASA, Aspirin® and salicylates.**
- Rotarix® is a live vaccine, so a small amount of the rotavirus may be in your baby's bowel movements for up to 10 days following immunization.
- Wash your hands well every time you care for your baby, particularly after changing diapers, to reduce the chance of transmission of the virus—especially around unimmunized infants, pregnant women or people whose immunity is suppressed for any reason (e.g. disease, medication or cancer treatment).

What else do I need to know?

- You can feed your baby, as usual, both before and after they have the oral vaccine.
- If an incomplete dose is administered for any reason, (e.g., infant spits or regurgitates the vaccine), a replacement dose should **not** be given. (CIG) The infant should continue to receive any remaining dose(s) in the series at the recommended time.
- Infants living in close contact with pregnant women can be vaccinated.
- If your infant has already had a rotavirus infection, they should still have the complete 2-dose series.
- If you are breastfeeding and being treated with monoclonal antibodies, your child may be vaccinated.

When should I seek medical attention after immunization?

- If your infant experiences any unusual side effects, seek medical attention and notify us.
- Go to Emergency at a hospital right away or call 911 if your infant has any of the following after immunization:
 - swelling of the face and neck
 - problems breathing
 - hives and itchy, reddened skin
 - vomiting, abdominal pain or blood in their bowel movement

Your Record of Protection

After you receive any immunization, make sure your health care provider updates your personal immunization record. Keep it in a safe place. Please inform us of any immunizations not received from public health.

Other questions? Talk to your health care provider or call our Immunization Program at 613-966-5500 Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | www.hpepublichealth.ca

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