

Rotavirus Vaccine

Public Health – Factsheet for Parents and Guardians

Vaccination has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other medical intervention.¹ Vaccines help your immune system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause disease.

What is rotavirus infection?

Rotavirus infection causes fever, stomach pain, vomiting (throwing up) and diarrhea that can last up to seven days. Fever and vomiting are usually the first symptoms that appear one to three days after a person has come into contact with the virus. If left untreated, severe and frequent diarrhea and/or vomiting can lead to dehydration in young children, which can result in hospitalization, and in severe cases, death.

Rotavirus is in the stool (poop) of an infected person and is spread easily by a person coming into contact with the infected stool and then touching their mouth. Rotavirus can live on the surface of objects (e.g. door handles, toys or diapers) and can survive on unwashed hands. Frequent hand washing with soap and water helps prevent the spread of rotavirus.

Almost all children who are NOT immunized will have at least one rotavirus infection before their fifth birthday. The first natural infection with rotavirus does not generally lead to permanent immunity. Rotavirus usually affects children between the ages of six months and two years. Older children and adults can also get rotavirus, but it is generally milder.

You should keep your children home, particularly from daycare, for up to 48 hours since they last vomited or had diarrhea, to help stop the spread of rotavirus infection to others.

What is the rotavirus vaccine?

The rotavirus vaccine is approved by Health Canada and protects against gastroenteritis (vomiting and diarrhea) caused by rotavirus. It is only recommended for babies.

The rotavirus vaccine used in Canada and Manitoba, known as Rotarix®, is a live, weakened vaccine (thimerosal-free) that is given by liquid drops into the mouth. Although the vaccine is a live vaccine, your child cannot get rotavirus from the rotavirus vaccine. For specific details about the vaccine's ingredients, please visit the Rotarix® Product Monograph

https://pdf.hres.ca/dpdf_pm/00046719.PDF

The rotavirus vaccine is safe and can be given at the same time as other childhood vaccines are scheduled. The rotavirus vaccine should be given first as the sucrose in this oral vaccine will help decrease discomfort from administration of the other childhood immunizations.

In the event that your baby spits out some, or most of the vaccine dose, a replacement dose should not be given. Your baby can eat and/or drink (including breast milk) immediately before and/or after receiving the rotavirus vaccine.

The virus from the vaccine may be found in a baby's stool after immunization. Remember to wash your hands thoroughly after changing diapers.

The rotavirus vaccine does not protect against diarrhea and/or vomiting caused by other viruses.

Why should my baby get the rotavirus vaccine?

Immunization is the best way to protect your baby against rotavirus infection.

Vaccines help your baby's body to fight potential future exposure to the virus by getting their immune system ready.

The rotavirus vaccine is very effective in preventing rotavirus infection and helps protect your baby, family and other people in your community. When your baby is immunized at 2 and 4 months of age, the rotavirus vaccine is about 86 per cent effective in preventing diarrhea caused by rotavirus.

Who should get the rotavirus vaccine?

The rotavirus vaccine is offered free-of-charge as part of Manitoba's routine childhood immunization schedule at two and four months of age.

The rotavirus vaccine will give your baby the best protection against rotavirus infection. Your baby should get the first dose after they are six weeks old and before they are 15 weeks old, with at least four weeks between both doses. As per the routine childhood immunization schedule, babies should get both doses of rotavirus vaccine before they are 32 weeks or eight months old.

Possible side-effects of the rotavirus vaccine

It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get a rotavirus infection. Health Canada approves vaccines based on a review of safety and quality.

Most babies do not have any reactions after they get the rotavirus vaccine. Some babies may have mild diarrhea or vomiting after being immunized.

¹ The Public Health Agency of Canada

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Intussusception, a condition where the bowel twists and creates a blockage, occurs in about 34 in 100,000 infants per year, regardless of immunization status. Some studies have shown that there is a small increased risk of intussusception in the seven days following first and second doses of rotavirus vaccine (between one and seven cases per 100,000 doses). Signs of intussusception may include a swollen abdomen or tummy, frequent vomiting and bloody stools. Your baby could seem weak and irritable and have several bouts of intense crying. If your baby is showing these signs, you should take your baby to the emergency department or health centre.

Acetylsalicylic acid (ASA - Aspirin® or generic versions) should NEVER be given to children because it can cause a severe liver and brain disease called Reye's Syndrome.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips.

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department or health centre for immediate attention if any reaction occurs after leaving the clinic.

Report any serious or unexpected side-effects to a health care provider.

Who should NOT get the rotavirus vaccine?

Speak with your health care provider if:

- Your baby has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of rotavirus vaccine or any contents of the vaccine.
- Your baby has a weakened immune system because of disease or medical treatment.
- Your baby has had intussusception (a blockage in the intestine), or has an intestinal disorder that may result in intussusception.

A child with a high fever, moderate-to-severe vomiting or diarrhea should not be immunized until they have recovered from the illness. The vaccine can still be given if the illness is mild, like a cold, or if your child has mild vomiting or diarrhea.

Your record of protection

Make sure your health care provider updates your baby's immunization record card, after they receive an immunization. Keep the card in a safe place!

Your baby's immunizations will be recorded in Manitoba's immunization registry. This registry:

- allows the health care provider to find out which immunizations your baby has had or needs to have
- may be used to produce immunization records, or notify you or your health care provider if a particular immunization has been missed
- allows Manitoba Health and Seniors Care and public health officials to monitor how well vaccines work in preventing disease

If you need information on the immunizations that your baby has received, contact your health care provider.

The Personal Health Information Act protects your baby's information. You can have your baby's personal health information hidden from view from health care providers. For additional information, please contact your local public health office to speak with a public health nurse.

For a listing of public health offices, please visit: www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/offices.html.

For more information on the rotavirus vaccine:

Talk to your health care provider.

Call Health Links–Info Santé in Winnipeg at 204-788-8200; toll-free elsewhere in Manitoba at 1-888-315-9257.

Or, visit:

Manitoba's Immunization Program website:

www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/index.html

Government of Canada website:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization-vaccines.html>

Canadian Immunization Guide website:

www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/canadian-immunization-guide.html

Rotarix® Product Monograph:

https://pdf.hres.ca/dpd_pm/00046719.PDF

Please visit *The Vaccine Factsheets and Resources* webpage for the most current factsheet: www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/vaccines.html