

Rotavirus (RotaTeq®) Vaccine Fact Sheet

The rotavirus vaccine, RotaTeq®, is a live **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, and 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 32 weeks of age, should receive three doses of the vaccine.
- The first dose should be given before 15 weeks of age and the vaccination series should be completed before 8 months of age (*Canadian Immunization Guide*).
- The three doses of RotaTeq® are usually given at the 2, 4 and 6 month immunization visits.
- The first dose is given starting at 6 weeks of age and before 15 weeks of age; the next two doses are given approximately one to two months apart (the second dose 4 to 10 weeks after the first; and the third and final dose, 4 to 10 weeks after the second.)
- If the first dose was given by mistake *after* 15 weeks of age, the series should be completed, with at least 4 weeks between doses.
- If your infant has already received a different rotavirus vaccine, such as Rotarix™, they should complete the series with it, if possible. If the vaccine that was given is unknown or unavailable, the series may be completed with the available vaccine. If any dose in the series was RotaTeq®, a total of 3 doses should be given.

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: five different types of rotavirus, sucrose, sodium citrate dehydrate; sodium phosphate monobasic monohydrate, sodium hydroxide, polysorbate 80, diluent and cell culture media **Does not 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 an impaired immune response / on medication that lowers the body's ability to fight infections
 - have recently received blood products
- If your infant has a high fever, serious infection worse than a cold, diarrhea or vomiting, you should postpone immunization until they feel better.

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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, severe abdominal pain/diarrhea, or blood in their bowel movement, seek medical attention right away. In babies, symptoms may include pulling the knees to the chest and crying, or crying when the abdomen is touched.
- 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.**
- RotaTeq® 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 feedings or changing diapers, to reduce the chance of transmission of the virus—be especially careful 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. 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 three-dose series.

When should I seek medical attention after immunization?

- If your infant experiences any unusual side effects, seek medical attention and notify us.
- Call 911 or go to Emergency at a hospital right away 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

References: Canadian Immunization Guide, Merck Jan 2018 Product Monograph

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

We are committed to providing accessible publications, programs and services to all. For assistance, please call 613-966-5500; TTY: 711, or email accessibility@hpeph.ca. For more information, please visit www.hpepublichealth.ca.