

What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a common infection that causes vomiting, diarrhea and stomach pain in infants and children that can last from 3–8 days. Symptoms usually appear 24–72 hours after a person has been exposed to the rotavirus infection.

It is very contagious, spreading easily from children who are already infected to other infants, children and sometimes adults. Most children are infected with rotavirus at least once by five years of age. Serious but rare symptoms commonly seen in children less than two years of age include severe diarrhea leading to hospitalization.

Rotavirus infection is a major cause of visits to health care providers and hospital-stays for infants and children under five years of age in Ontario. Deaths in Ontario due to rotavirus are rare.

Who should get the vaccine?

In Ontario, the rotavirus vaccine is a publicly funded two-dose series recommended for infants at two and four months of age. The vaccine series should be completed by 24 weeks of age.

Rotavirus Vaccine

Rotavirus vaccine is a live oral vaccine that is given by mouth to infants less than six months of age. It can be given at the same time as other recommended routine immunizations.

The vaccine has shown 85–96% effectiveness against severe rotavirus gastroenteritis. During the first year after vaccination, vaccine was shown to be 70–87% effective.

Because it is a live vaccine, it can be in the stool or feces of infants for up to 10 days after vaccination. To prevent the spread of the live vaccine virus, anyone caring for the immunized baby should wash their hands frequently especially after changing diapers.

Who should NOT get the vaccine?

Any infant who has:

- an allergy to a previous dose of the vaccine
- a known or suspected immunocompromising condition.
- a history of intussusception (when the intestine telescopes over itself)
- uncorrected congenital abdominal disorders (such a Meckel's diverticulum)
- received blood products in the last 42 days
- severe allergy to latex — special consideration required

Side effects

Your child may become irritable or have mild, temporary diarrhea after getting a dose. Severe reactions are very rare and may include a slight increased risk of intussusception (which can lead to bowel obstruction).

In large studies of the vaccine used in Ontario, children were not likely to get intussusception after getting the rotavirus vaccine. This information still requires further investigation and studies are ongoing.

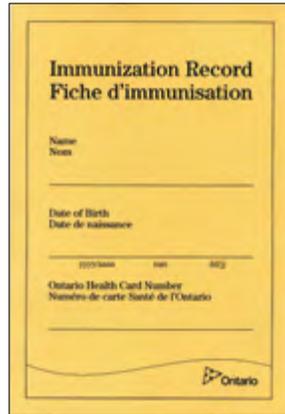
The rotavirus vaccine offers tremendous benefits by protecting infants and children from rotavirus disease. Rotavirus is the most common cause of severe diarrhea among infants and young children. According to the United States Center for Disease Control, the risk of intussusception after rotavirus vaccination is much lower than the risk of severe rotavirus disease in children who do not receive rotavirus vaccine.

When should I seek medical attention?

If you develop hives, swelling of the face or mouth, trouble breathing, severe drowsiness or symptoms of a bowel obstruction (intussusception). Symptoms of intussusception include stomach pain with severe crying (which may be brief) as well as several episodes of vomiting and blood in the stool. A baby may act weak or become very irritable.

Your record of protection

After any immunization, ensure your personal immunization record or "yellow card" is updated. Keep it in a safe place.



Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or contact Public Health at 519-575-4400.

Accessible formats of this document are available upon request.

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