



## Rotavirus Vaccine

**Keep your child safe.  
Get all vaccines on time.**

By getting all vaccines on time, your child can be protected from many diseases over a lifetime.

Immunization has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other health measure.

### What is the rotavirus vaccine?

The rotavirus vaccine helps protect babies against diarrhea and vomiting caused by rotavirus. It does not protect against diarrhea and vomiting caused by other viruses. The vaccine contains a weakened form of rotavirus that does not cause disease. The vaccine is approved by Health Canada.

The rotavirus vaccine is provided free as part of your child's routine immunizations. Call your health care provider to make an appointment.

### Who should get the rotavirus vaccine?

The rotavirus vaccine is recommended for all babies. The vaccine is given as a series of 2 doses. The first dose is given at 2 months of age, and the second at 4 months. The rotavirus vaccine is given at the same time as other childhood immunizations.

Rotavirus Vaccine	Child's Age at Immunization
1st dose	2 months of age
2nd dose	4 months of age

It is important to start the vaccine at 2 months of age and to get the second dose on time. This vaccine cannot be given after 8 months of age and 2 doses are needed for best protection.

It is important to keep a record of all immunizations received.

The vaccine is given by mouth. A few drops of the liquid vaccine are placed into your baby's mouth to swallow.

The virus from the vaccine may be found in your baby's stool for at least 10 days after immunization. Parents and caregivers should wash their hands thoroughly after changing diapers.

### What are the benefits of the rotavirus vaccine?

The vaccine prevents about 3 out of 4 cases of rotavirus disease, and almost all severe cases, including hospitalizations. When you get your child immunized you help protect others as well.

### What are the possible reactions after the vaccine?

Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get a rotavirus infection.

Most babies do not have any reactions after they get the rotavirus vaccine. Some may have diarrhea, crankiness, stomach pain, gas or an itchy rash after being immunized.

In some countries outside of Canada, a very rare risk of intussusception (a blockage of the intestine) has been seen in the week after the first dose of rotavirus vaccine. The risk of intussusception is about 1 to 2 cases for every 100,000 babies that get the vaccine. At most, this could affect 1 baby a year in B.C. By comparison, each year in B.C. about 1 in 4,000 children under the age of 1 get intussusception without having received the vaccine.

Signs of intussusception may include a swollen abdomen, 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 closest emergency department.

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. If this happens after you leave the clinic, call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number. This reaction can be treated and occurs in less than 1 in a million people who get a vaccine. It is important to always report serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

Acetaminophen or Tylenol® can be given for fever. ASA or Aspirin® should NOT be given to anyone under 20 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome.

For more information on Reye Syndrome, see [HealthLinkBC File #84 Reye Syndrome](#).

### Who should not get the rotavirus vaccine?

Speak with your health care provider if your baby:

- has had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of rotavirus vaccine or any component of the vaccine;
- has an immune system weakened by disease or medical treatment;
- had intussusception or has an intestinal disorder that may result in intussusception.

Babies who have moderate or severe diarrhea or vomiting, or a serious illness should not be immunized until they have recovered from their illness.

There is no need to delay getting immunized because of a cold or other mild illness. However, if you have concerns, speak with your health care provider.

### What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a virus that causes gastroenteritis, sometimes called the stomach flu. Rotavirus is the most common cause of diarrhea and hospitalization for diarrhea in children under 5 years of age. Almost all children will have at

least 1 rotavirus infection before they are 5 years of age.

The first symptoms of rotavirus infection are usually fever and vomiting, followed by diarrhea and stomach pain. These symptoms appear 1 to 3 days after a person has been infected with the virus. Diarrhea can last from 4 to 8 days. Severe and frequent diarrhea and/or vomiting can lead to dehydration in young children, and this may result in death if not treated.

Rotavirus is easily spread through contact with the stools of an infected child, such as the handling of diapers. The most effective method to prevent the spread of rotavirus is frequent hand washing with soap and water. In addition, a child who is sick with diarrhea or vomiting should not attend day care or have contact with other children until 48 hours after the diarrhea or vomiting has ended. For tips on hand washing, see [HealthLinkBC File #85 Hand Washing for Parents and Children](#).

For more information on immunizations visit Immunize BC at [www.immunizebc.ca](http://www.immunizebc.ca).

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit [www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles) or your local public health unit.

Click on [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca) or call **8-1-1** for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance, call 7-1-1 in B.C.

Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.



ImmunizeBC



BC Centre for Disease Control  
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority