

# ROTAVIRUS VACCINE

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Many Vaccine Information Statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See [www.immunize.org/vis](http://www.immunize.org/vis).  
Hojas de Información Sobre Vacunas están disponibles en Español y en muchos otros idiomas. Visite <http://www.immunize.org/vis>

### 1 What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a virus that causes diarrhea (sometimes severe), mostly in babies and young children. It is often accompanied by vomiting and fever, and can lead to dehydration.

Rotavirus is not the only cause of diarrhea, but it is one of the most serious. Before a vaccine was available, rotavirus was responsible for:

- more than 400,000 doctor visits,
- more than 200,000 emergency room visits,
- 55,000 to 70,000 hospitalizations, and
- 20-60 deaths

in the United States each year. Almost all children in the U.S. were infected with rotavirus before their 5th birthday.

### 2 Rotavirus vaccine

Better hygiene and sanitation have not reduced rotavirus diarrhea very much in the United States. **The best way to protect your baby from rotavirus disease is with rotavirus vaccine.**

Rotavirus vaccine is an oral (swallowed) vaccine, not a shot.

Rotavirus vaccine will not prevent diarrhea or vomiting caused by other germs, but it is very good at preventing diarrhea and vomiting caused by rotavirus. Most babies who get the vaccine will not get rotavirus diarrhea at all, and almost all of them will be protected from **severe** rotavirus diarrhea.

Rotavirus vaccine has been used since 2006 in the United States. By 2010 it had reduced the number of babies and young children needing emergency department care or hospitalization for rotavirus disease by about 85%.

### 3 Who should get rotavirus vaccine and when?

There are two brands of rotavirus vaccine. Both vaccines are effective.

Your baby could get either 2 or 3 doses, depending on which brand is used. Your provider can tell you which brand your baby will be getting.

The doses are recommended at these ages:

First Dose: 2 months of age

Second Dose: 4 months of age

Third Dose: 6 months of age (if needed)

The first dose may be given as early as 6 weeks of age, and should be given by age 14 weeks 6 days. The last dose should be given by 8 months of age.

Rotavirus vaccine may be given at the same time as other childhood vaccines.

### 4 Some people should not get rotavirus vaccine or should wait.

- A baby who has had a severe (life-threatening) allergic reaction to a dose of rotavirus vaccine should not get another dose. A baby who has a severe (life-threatening) allergy to any component of rotavirus vaccine should not get the vaccine. Tell your doctor if your baby has any severe allergies that you know of, including a severe allergy to latex.
- Babies with “severe combined immunodeficiency” (SCID) should not get rotavirus vaccine.
- Babies with mild illnesses can usually get the vaccine. Babies who are moderately or severely ill should probably wait until they recover. This includes babies who have moderate or severe diarrhea or vomiting. Ask your doctor or nurse.
- Check with your doctor if your baby’s immune system is weakened because of:

- HIV/AIDS, or any other disease that affects the immune system
- treatment with drugs such as long-term steroids
- cancer, or cancer treatment with radiation or drugs
- Tell your doctor if your baby has ever had intussusception, a type of bowel blockage that is treated in a hospital.

## 5 What are the risks from rotavirus vaccine?

A vaccine, like any medicine, could possibly cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of any vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.

A virus (or parts of a virus) called porcine circovirus is present in both rotavirus vaccines. There is no evidence that this virus is a safety risk or causes illness in humans. For more information, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/rotavirus>.

Most babies who get rotavirus vaccine do not have any problems with it.

### Mild problems

Babies might become irritable, or to have mild, temporary diarrhea or vomiting after getting a dose of rotavirus vaccine.

### Serious problems

Some studies have shown a small increase in cases of intussusception within a week after the first dose of rotavirus vaccine. Intussusception is a type of bowel blockage that is treated in a hospital. In some cases surgery might be required. The estimated risk is 1 intussusception case per 100,000 infants.

## 6 What if there is a moderate or severe reaction?

### What should I look for?

During the first week after the first dose of vaccine, look for episodes of **stomach pain** with severe **crying** (which may be brief), several episodes of **vomiting**, or **blood in the stool**. Your baby could act **weak** or be very **irritable**.

Look for any unusual condition, such as a severe allergic reaction or a high fever. If a severe al-

lergic reaction occurred, it would be within a few minutes to an hour after the vaccination. Signs of a serious allergic reaction can include **difficulty breathing, weakness, hoarseness or wheezing, a fast heart beat, hives, dizziness, paleness, or swelling of the throat**.

### What should I do?

- Call a doctor, or get the person to a doctor right away.
- Tell your doctor what happened, the date and time it happened, and when the vaccination was given.
- Ask your provider to report the reaction by filing a Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) form. Or you can file this report through the VAERS website at [www.vaers.hhs.gov](http://www.vaers.hhs.gov), or by calling **1-800-822-7967**.

*VAERS does not provide medical advice.*

## 7 The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program

The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP) was created in 1986.

Persons who believe they may have been injured by a vaccine may file a claim with VICP by calling **1-800-338-2382** or by visiting their website at [www.hrsa.gov/vaccinecompensation](http://www.hrsa.gov/vaccinecompensation).

## 8 How can I learn more?

- Ask your health care provider. They can give you the vaccine package insert or suggest other sources of information.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
  - Call **1-800-232-4636** (1-800-CDC-INFO)
  - Visit CDC's National Immunization Program website at: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

