

# Rotavirus Vaccine

**Vaccines have saved more lives in Canada in the last 60 years than any other medical intervention. Vaccines help your immune system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause diseases.**

## Rotavirus is a vaccine preventable disease.

**Rotavirus** is a virus that causes severe diarrhea in babies and young children. It causes inflammation of the stomach and intestines, and is sometimes called gastroenteritis or “gastro”. Most children have been infected with a rotavirus by age five. Rotavirus tends to be most severe and occurs more frequently in children between 3 months and 3 years old. A person can get a rotavirus illness more than once, but each new infection tends to be milder.

## What are the symptoms of rotavirus illness?

Symptoms appear 1 to 3 days after a person has become infected and include fever, vomiting, diarrhea and stomach pain. A person who has rotavirus is contagious before they start to feel sick until 24 hours or longer after their diarrhea stops. Diarrhea can last from 3 to 8 days. Severe and frequent diarrhea and/or vomiting can lead to dehydration in young children, and may require a visit to the emergency department and/or hospitalization where intravenous (IV) fluids can be given.

## How do people get rotavirus?

Rotavirus is found in the feces (poop) of an infected person. Rotavirus is spread easily by the fecal-oral (hand to mouth) route. A rotavirus can survive on unwashed hands for about four hours.

Common ways to be exposed to rotaviruses include:

- Direct person-to-person contact with someone who is infected.
- Touching surfaces (tables, counters) or objects (toys) contaminated with a rotavirus and then placing these objects or fingers in the mouth.
- Eating food prepared by an infected person or by drinking contaminated water or other drinks prepared by an infected person.

## How can rotavirus illness be prevented?

- Immunize your baby with the rotavirus vaccine. When your baby is immunized, you help protect others as well.
- Wash your and your child’s hands often with soap and warm water (or use hand sanitizer if you can’t wash your hands) after using the toilet, diapering and before preparing or eating food.
- Do not prepare food if you have symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea.
- Anyone who is ill with diarrhea or vomiting should stay home from school, daycare or work, and should not return until they are symptom-free for 24 hours. This is especially important for those who work with food, children or the elderly, and in health care settings.
- The rotavirus vaccine only helps to protect babies from diarrhea and vomiting caused by some rotavirus strains. This vaccine does not protect against diarrhea and vomiting caused by other viruses.

## Who can get this vaccine for free?

- The rotavirus vaccine is free for babies who are 6 weeks to 8 months 0 days of age. The rotavirus vaccine is given at the same time as other childhood immunizations and is safe for breastfeeding infants.
- The vaccine is given by mouth (not a needle). Liquid drops are placed into the baby’s mouth to swallow.
- Babies can eat and drink any time before or after receiving the rotavirus vaccine.
- It is important that babies get the first dose at 2 months old and get the second dose at 4 months old.

Dose	Age	Comment
1	2 months	This dose <b>cannot be</b> given later than 14 weeks 6 days of age
2	4 months	This dose <b>cannot be</b> given later than 8 months 0 days of age.

## Special Considerations

- The vaccine form of the rotavirus may be found in the baby's feces (poop) for up to 10 days after they received the vaccine. To prevent the spread of rotavirus to others, it is very important that parents and caregivers wash their hands very well after changing the baby's diapers.

## Who should not get this vaccine?

**A mild illness, with or without a fever, is not a reason to avoid immunization.**

- Babies who have diarrhea or are vomiting, with or without a fever, should delay immunization.
- A baby who had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of a rotavirus vaccine or any components of the vaccine.
- A baby who has a history of intussusception (a condition where the intestine folds into itself and can be treated).
- A baby who has an uncorrected congenital gastrointestinal tract malformation (e.g. Meckel's diverticulum) that would predispose them for intussusception.
- A baby whose mother took monoclonal antibody medications during pregnancy.
- A baby with a weakened immune system related to a **known disease or medical therapy** should have a consultation with a medical specialist before receiving this vaccine.

## What are common reactions to this vaccine?

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

- Common reactions generally occur within 1 to 7 days and may include fever, diarrhea, irritability and loss of appetite.
- Less common reactions may include flatulence (gas), vomiting, abdominal pain, and dermatitis.
- Although a previous rotavirus vaccine in the 1990's was linked to intussusception, the current rotavirus vaccines have not been associated with an increased risk of intussusception in babies who receive the vaccine.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempa) may be given for fever or soreness. ASA (Aspirin) must NOT be given to anyone younger than 18 years old because of the risk of Reye syndrome.

References: ROTARIX™ product monograph (2016).

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 one in one million people who get the vaccine.

## Who should you report reactions to?

- Report any adverse or unexpected reactions to your local public health nurse, your doctor, or nurse practitioner as soon as possible.

## Talk to a public health nurse:

- If you have questions or concerns about your or your child's reaction to an immunization.
- If you had to take your child to a doctor, a hospital or to a health centre with a symptom that might be related to immunization.

## What does this vaccine contain?

**ROTARIX™** is given by mouth and contains human rotavirus RIX4414 strain (live, attenuated), Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium (DMEM), sucrose, di-sodium adipate and sterile water. Residual porcine circovirus type 1 (PCV-1) material has been detected in ROTARIX™ vaccine. PCV-1 is not a pork product and is acceptable to individuals that do not consume pork products. PCV-1 is not known to cause disease in animals and is not known to infect or cause disease in humans. There is no evidence that the presence of PCV-1 poses a safety risk. The manufacturer cannot guarantee that the product cap does not contain latex. Thimerosal-free.

To ensure that a complete immunization record is maintained, every immunization administered to an individual will be documented by Public Health into the electronic provincial immunization registry, known as Panorama. Panorama is a secure electronic system used in Saskatchewan to record and manage immunization records and the health information related to immunization for all Saskatchewan residents. Immunization records may be shared with other health care professionals to provide public health services; assist with diagnosis and treatment; and to control the spread of vaccine preventable diseases. Information about Panorama is detailed in the "Protecting the Privacy of Your Immunization Record" fact sheet.

**For more information contact your local public health office, your physician, nurse practitioner, HealthLine online or by calling 811.**