

ROTAVIRUS VACCINE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

1 What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a virus that causes severe diarrhea, mostly in babies and young children. It is often accompanied by vomiting and fever.

Rotavirus is not the only cause of severe diarrhea, but it is one of the most serious. Each year in the United States rotavirus is responsible for:

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

Almost all children in the U.S. are infected with rotavirus before their 5th birthday.

Children are most likely to get rotavirus disease between November and May, depending on the part of the country.

Your child can get rotavirus infection by being around other children who are already infected.

2 Rotavirus vaccine

Better hygiene and sanitation have not been very good at reducing rotavirus disease. Rotavirus vaccine is the best way to protect children against rotavirus disease.

Rotavirus vaccine is an oral (swallowed) vaccine; it is not given by injection.

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. About 98% of children who get the vaccine are protected from *severe* rotavirus diarrhea, and about 74% do not get rotavirus diarrhea at all.

Children who get the vaccine are also much less likely to be hospitalized or to see a doctor because of rotavirus infection.



3 Who should get rotavirus vaccine and when?

Children should get 3 doses of rotavirus vaccine. They are recommended at these ages:

- First Dose: 2 months of age
- Second Dose: 4 months of age
- Third Dose: 6 months of age

- The first dose should be given between 6 and 12 weeks of age. The vaccine has not been studied when started among children outside that age range.
- Children should have gotten all 3 doses by 32 weeks of age.

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

Children who get the vaccine may be fed normally afterward.

4 Some children should not get rotavirus vaccine or should wait

- A child who has had a severe (life-threatening) allergic reaction to a dose of rotavirus vaccine should not get another dose. A child who has a severe (life threatening) allergy to any component of rotavirus vaccine should not get the vaccine. Tell your doctor if your child has any severe allergies that you know of.
- Children who are moderately or severely ill at the time the vaccination is scheduled should probably wait until they recover. This includes children who have diarrhea or vomiting. Ask your doctor or nurse. Children with mild illnesses should usually get the vaccine.
- Check with your doctor if your child has any ongoing digestive problems.