

What is Rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a virus that causes a gastrointestinal infection. It is very contagious and most commonly affects children between the ages of 6 months and 2 years. Symptoms include fever, vomiting, watery diarrhea and stomach pain, which may last from three to eight days. The loss of fluids from vomiting and diarrhea can lead to dehydration in young children. Rotavirus infection is one of the most common causes of visits to the doctor and hospitalization in this age group.

How is Rotavirus spread?

Rotavirus spreads easily when the virus enters the body through the mouth. The stool of infected children contains a lot of germs, which may end up on their hands, the hands of their caregiver or on other items. The virus is spread by contact with an infected person or indirectly through contact with contaminated articles (e.g. toys, furniture). Prevention includes vaccination and hand washing especially before and after diaper changes and feeding.

Is this vaccine mandatory?

The vaccine is not mandatory but is highly recommended for protection against preventable disease. In this province we offer Rotavirus vaccine to all children free of charge at **2 and 4 months** of age.

Is the vaccine safe?

All vaccines recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Provincial Department of Health and Community Services such as this one are safe and effective.

What are the vaccine's common side effects?

Common side effects in about 10% of babies may include irritability, fever and loss of appetite for a day or two. Very few children (less than 10%) may experience other less common side effects including fatigue, diarrhea, vomiting, cough and runny nose. Extreme abdominal cramping and pain is rare, if your infant experiences this please see a physician right away and inform them your child was immunized with Rotavirus vaccine.

Who should NOT get the Rotavirus vaccine?

Anyone who has had an allergic reaction to any contents of the vaccine or had a reaction a previous dose of this vaccine should talk to their Health Care Provider for advice about future immunization with this vaccine.

Children who have a history of **intussusception** (when one segment of intestine or bowel folds inside the other causing the intestinal wall to swell and bleed) **or** those with **uncorrected congenital malformations** of the gastrointestinal tract that could lead to intussusception and children with **Severe Combined Immunodeficiency (SCID) disorder** should not receive this vaccine.

Should children be vaccinated if mother is taking immunosuppressant medication during pregnancy or breastfeeding?

Please consult your physician or specialist to determine if a live vaccine, such as Rotavirus vaccine, can be given to the infant.

Can children drink liquids or breastfeed before or after immunization? Yes.

For additional information and
services contact the Regional Health
Authority in your community