

# Rotavirus and the Vaccine (Drops) to Prevent It

Last updated April 2017

**The best way to protect against rotavirus is to get rotavirus vaccine. Doctors recommend all children get the vaccine.**

## Why should my child get rotavirus vaccine?

The rotavirus vaccine:

- Protects your child from rotavirus, a potentially serious disease.
- Prevents your child from developing diarrhea, vomiting, and stomach pain caused by rotavirus.
- Keeps your child from missing school or childcare (and keeps you from missing work to care for your sick child).

## Is rotavirus vaccine safe?

Both rotavirus vaccines (RotaTeq and Rotarix) are very safe and effective at preventing rotavirus disease. Millions of babies in the United States have gotten the vaccine safely.

## What are the side effects?

Side effects are rare, usually mild, and may include fussiness, diarrhea, and vomiting.

Some studies have shown a small rise in cases of intussusception within a week after the first or second dose of rotavirus vaccine. Intussusception is a type of bowel blockage that is treated in a hospital. Some babies might need surgery. Studies estimate a risk ranging from about 1 intussusception case in every 20,000 infants to 1 intussusception case in every 100,000 infants after vaccination.

There are 2 brands of rotavirus vaccine: RotaTeq and Rotarix. They are both given by mouth, not by a shot.

## What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus causes severe diarrhea and vomiting. It affects mostly babies and young children. Diarrhea and vomiting can lead to serious dehydration (loss of body fluid). If dehydration is not treated, it can be deadly.

## What are the symptoms of rotavirus?

Rotavirus symptoms include the following:

- Fever
- Watery diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain

Diarrhea and vomiting can last for 3 to 8 days. Children may stop eating and drinking while they are sick.



Doctors recommend your child get two or three doses of the vaccine (depending on the brand of vaccine) for best protection. Babies should get the first dose at 2 months of age. For both vaccine brands, babies get a second dose at 4 months. If he's getting RotaTeq, he'll need a third dose at 6 months.

## **Is it serious?**

Rotavirus can be very harmful. Diarrhea, vomiting, and fever can cause a loss of body fluids. This leads to dehydration, which can be very dangerous, especially for babies and young children. Some children need an IV (needle in their vein) in the hospital to replace lost fluids.

## **How does rotavirus spread?**

Rotavirus spreads easily. The virus is in the stool (poop) of people who are infected. A person can get sick if they touch an object contaminated with rotavirus and put their hand in their mouth or consume contaminated food or drinks. The disease commonly spreads in families, hospitals, and childcare centers.

Rotavirus can live on objects for several days. It is very difficult to stop its spread just by hand washing or disinfecting surfaces. The best way to protect young children from rotavirus is to get them vaccinated.

## **Where can I learn more about the rotavirus vaccine and my child?**

To learn more about the rotavirus vaccine, talk to your child's doctor, call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommend all children receive their vaccines according to the recommended schedule.