

Immunization Facts for Families

Rotavirus

Updated September 2, 2026

Your baby's immune system is always learning. At just two months old, it's ready to learn how to spot and stop rotavirus. This vaccine helps protect babies as they grow, develop, and experience the world in their own way.

The rotavirus vaccine protects your baby from:

Severe diarrhea, vomiting, fever, and stomach pain can lead to dehydration requiring hospital care and IV fluids.

Why should my baby receive the rotavirus vaccine?

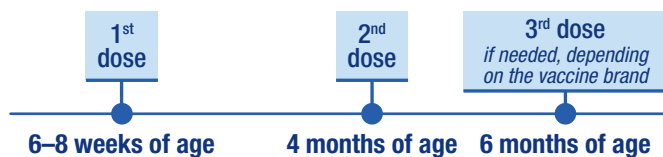
Before the rotavirus vaccine, more than 50,000 children under 5 used to be hospitalized with rotavirus annually. Thanks to widespread rotavirus vaccination, hospitalization is rare: the vaccine prevents an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 hospitalizations among babies and young children in the U.S. each year.

Who should receive the rotavirus vaccine and when?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends the rotavirus vaccine for all infants.

Children receive 2 or 3 doses of rotavirus vaccine, depending on the vaccine brand.

- 1st dose: 6–8 weeks of age
- 2nd dose: 4 months of age
- 3rd dose: 6 months of age (if needed, depending on the vaccine brand)



The vaccine is given by mouth, not as a shot.

Infants who do not receive their first dose of rotavirus vaccine before 15 weeks of age should not start the vaccine series later. All doses should be completed by 8 months of age.



How does rotavirus spread?

Rotaviruses live in human feces (poop). The disease spreads when traces of poop from an infected person make their way into the mouth of a non-infected person. This can happen:

- When eating contaminated food, if someone goes to the bathroom or changes a diaper, then prepares food without washing their hands well.
- When children touch contaminated objects or surfaces, such as toys, and then put the object or their hands in their mouths.
- By directly touching infected drops of saliva, snot or other body fluids.

Rotavirus spreads easily in childcare settings. In addition to vaccination, thorough handwashing and cleaning can help reduce the spread of rotavirus.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

Side effects are usually mild and go away on their own. Some babies may experience irritability and mild, temporary diarrhea or vomiting.

- There is a very small risk of intussusception (a type of bowel blockage) after rotavirus vaccination. This rare side effect usually occurs within a week after the first or second dose. If your child has signs of stomach pain or irritation after the vaccine, see a doctor. Babies who have had intussusception before should not receive the rotavirus vaccine.



Learn more

If you have questions about vaccines and keeping your child healthy, talk with your child's pediatrician. Visit www.healthychildren.org/rotavirus for more information on rotavirus vaccine from the AAP.

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