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Protect your baby against **rotavirus infection**

A common cause of diarrhoea and
sickness that can be very serious



Rotavirus

What is rotavirus?

Most babies have sickness (vomiting) and diarrhoea at some time. Many of these illnesses are caused by rotavirus.

Most babies recover at home. Some cases can become serious with babies getting dehydrated (losing body fluids) and needing hospital treatment.

Before the introduction of the rotavirus vaccine programme most children got rotavirus at some time before they were five years old. In Wales **1 in 5** of these children required medical attention and **1 in 10** were admitted to hospital.

Vaccination is now helping to stop 7 out of every 10 cases of rotavirus infection in babies.

How is rotavirus spread?

Rotavirus is spread very easily and babies can pass it on to others. The virus spreads through hand to mouth contact and is picked up from surfaces such as toys, hands or used nappies.

Washing hands and keeping surfaces clean can help but can never completely stop it spreading. The best way to protect your baby is to give them the vaccine.

When will my baby be offered the vaccination?

Rotavirus vaccine will be given with your baby's other vaccinations at two months and three months. Your baby needs two rotavirus vaccines at least four weeks apart.

If your baby misses one of the vaccinations, it can also be given with the other vaccines at two and four months of age, or at three and four months, but no later.

Why can't older babies have the vaccine?

As they get older, some babies (about 1 in 1,000) can get a condition that causes a blockage in their lower gut called intussusception.

It is very rare before three months of age, most cases occur between five months and a year. There is a very small chance, around 2 in every 100,000 babies, that the first dose of the vaccine might also cause this.

To reduce the risk, the first dose will not be given to babies older than 14 weeks, and no vaccine will be given to infants older than 23 weeks.



What if my baby vomits immediately after having the vaccine?

This doesn't usually happen, but if it does the drops will be given again.

Will my baby get the rotavirus disease from having the vaccine?

No, the viruses in the vaccine are weakened so they don't cause the disease. The vaccine helps your baby build up immunity so the next time he or she comes into contact with the virus they will have the best possible protection.

All those in close contact with recently vaccinated infants, especially those with weakened immune systems, should observe good hygiene, for example, washing their hands after changing a child's nappy.

Does the vaccine have any side effects?

Millions of doses of the vaccine have been used and it has a good safety record.

Babies who have had the vaccine can become restless and irritable, and some may develop mild diarrhoea.

In very rare cases (about 2 in every 100,000 babies vaccinated), the vaccine can affect the baby's lower gut and they may develop pain, vomiting, and may pass what looks like red jelly in their nappies, usually within seven days of vaccination. If this happens, you should contact your doctor immediately.

You can report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines through the Yellow Card scheme online at: yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk or by calling the hotline on **0800 731 6789** (Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm).

A photograph of a baby lying down, smiling, with an adult's hands visible near the baby's head. The baby is wearing a yellow top. The background is dark and out of focus.

If you are concerned about your baby's health after any vaccination you should speak to your doctor or health visitor.

What if my baby is ill on the day the vaccination is due?

There is no reason to postpone the appointment unless your baby is ill with a fever, is vomiting or has diarrhoea.

Are there any babies who should not have the vaccine?

The vaccination should not be given to babies who:

- ✗ Are over 23 weeks of age.
- ✗ Are over 14 weeks of age if attending for their first rotavirus vaccine.
- ✗ Have had an anaphylactic reaction (severe allergic reaction) to a previous dose of the vaccine, or to any of the ingredients.
- ✗ Have a previous history of intussusception (blockage in lower gut).
- ✗ Have a long term condition, affecting the gut or immune system such as severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID). Discuss this with your GP first.
- ✗ Have a fever, diarrhoea or vomiting on the day of the appointment. The visit should be rearranged.

My baby was born premature. When should the vaccine be given?

The immunisation schedule should be followed based on the age of your baby's actual date of birth.

Can my baby be breast fed after the vaccination?

Yes. There are no problems with breast-feeding babies who have recently had the rotavirus vaccine.

Will the vaccine stop babies getting any sickness and diarrhoea?

No. Rotavirus isn't the only cause of sickness and diarrhoea in babies. The vaccine will stop about 7 out of 10 babies getting rotavirus.

Rotavirus vaccination - the key messages

Infection with rotavirus causes sickness and diarrhoea in babies and young children.

It can be very serious, and some babies may need to go to hospital.

Rotavirus vaccine is given by mouth with other vaccines at two and three months of age.

Two doses of the rotavirus vaccine will help prevent 7 out of 10 cases of rotavirus infection in babies.

Where can I find more information?

You can find more about possible side effects and vaccine contents by entering the name of the vaccine in the search box at **www.medicines.org.uk/emc**. Rotarix is the name of the current vaccine.

The routine immunisation schedule that shows you which immunisations are offered in Wales is available from **www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/livewell/vaccinations/Leaflets**

If you have any questions or want more information, talk to your doctor or nurse, or phone NHS Direct Wales on **0845 46 47** (or call 111 if this service is available in your area) or visit: **www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/livewell/vaccinations/Rotavirus**

To order more copies of this leaflet, visit:

www.publichealthwales.org/HealthInformationResources

To find out how the NHS uses your information, visit:

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