

### Are there any babies who shouldn't have the vaccination?

As set out above, the first vaccination should not be given after 15 weeks of age and no vaccination should be given after 24 weeks.

The vaccination should not be given to babies who:

- have Severe Combined Immune Deficiency (SCID), a rare genetic disease that makes babies very vulnerable to infection
- have mothers who had treatment that affected her immune system while she was pregnant or breastfeeding
- have reacted very badly to a previous dose of the vaccine, or to any of the ingredients that go into the vaccine
- have certain long-term conditions – in which case speak to your GP first
- have a fever, diarrhoea or are vomiting on the day of the appointment, in which case the visit should be rearranged.

### My baby was premature. When should they have the vaccine?

As with all vaccinations, the immunisation schedule should be followed from the actual date of birth, not from the date when the baby was due.

### Is it OK to breast-feed my baby after they have the vaccination?

Yes. There are no problems associated 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. However, the vaccine will stop about 8 out of 10 babies getting vomiting and diarrhoea caused by rotavirus. And the more babies that have the vaccine, the more difficult it will be for the virus to spread.



### Where can I find more information?

To find out more, talk to your GP, health visitor or practice nurse at any time or pick up a more detailed leaflet or Q&A factsheet from your GP surgery. You can also visit [www.nhs.uk/rotavirus-vaccine](http://www.nhs.uk/rotavirus-vaccine)

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Product code 2021209R. 1p 300K AUG 2021 (APS)

To order more copies of this leaflet visit [www.healthpublications.gov.uk](http://www.healthpublications.gov.uk) or phone: 0300 123 1002 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday)

[www.nhs.uk/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations)



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# Protecting your baby against rotavirus



**i**mmunisation  
the safest way to protect your baby

## A vaccine to protect babies against rotavirus infection has been included as part of the routine childhood immunisation schedule since July 2013.

This flyer describes the disease and the vaccine that protects against it.

### What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is an infection that causes vomiting and diarrhoea in thousands of young babies every year. Most babies recover at home but, in a small number of cases, rotavirus infection can become serious, with babies getting dehydrated (losing body fluids) and possibly needing hospital treatment.

### How is rotavirus spread?

Rotavirus spreads easily through hand to mouth contact and can be picked up from surfaces such as toys, hands or dirty nappies. It can also be spread through the air by sneezing and coughing. Washing hands and keeping surfaces clean can help reduce the spread of the virus but will never completely stop it.

Vaccination is a much more effective way to protect babies from getting infected.

### When will my baby have the vaccination?

The vaccine will be given with his or her other routine vaccinations at 8 weeks of age and again at 12 weeks. Your baby needs 2 rotavirus vaccinations at least 4 weeks apart to get the best protection.

If he or she misses one of the vaccinations, the first dose can be given to babies up to 15 weeks old but no vaccine will be given to babies over 24 weeks of age. They can have the second dose if they had their first dose before 15 weeks.

### Why can't older babies have the vaccine?

As they get older, some babies – about 1 out of 1,000 – get a condition that causes a blockage in their lower gut. It is extremely rare before 3 months of age and most cases occur between 5 months and a year.

In addition, there is a very small chance (between 1 and 6 in every 100,000 babies vaccinated) that the first dose of the vaccine might also cause this blockage to develop. To reduce the risk of this happening, the first dose of the vaccine will not be given to babies older than 15 weeks of age.

### How is the vaccine given?

Rotavirus vaccine is given as a drops to make it easy for your baby to swallow.

### What if my baby spits out the vaccine or vomits immediately after having it?

The drops can be given again at the same appointment.

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

The virus in the vaccine is weakened so it mimics 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 not get the disease.

Because the vaccine is given by mouth, it's possible that the virus in the vaccine will pass through your baby's gut and be picked up by whoever changes his or her nappy. All those in close contact with recently vaccinated infants should observe good personal hygiene and be sure to wash their hands after changing a child's nappy.

### 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 seriously ill, is vomiting or has diarrhoea, or has a fever. If your baby is well enough to have the other routine vaccines, he or she can have the rotavirus vaccine.

### Does the vaccine have any side effects?

Many millions of doses of the vaccine have been used and it has a good safety record. Babies who have had the vaccine can sometimes become restless and irritable, between 1 and 10 in every 100 vaccinated may develop mild diarrhoea. In very rare cases (between 1 and 6 in every 100,000 babies vaccinated), the vaccine can affect the baby's lower gut and they may develop abdominal pain, vomiting, and sometimes they may pass what looks like redcurrant jelly in their nappies. If this happens, you should contact your doctor immediately.

