

View this article online at: [patient.info/medicine/rotavirus-vaccine-rotarix](https://patient.info/medicine/rotavirus-vaccine-rotarix)

## Rotavirus vaccine (Rotarix)

Rotarix® vaccine will help to protect your baby against gastroenteritis caused by rotavirus infection. This is the most common virus causing sickness (vomiting) and diarrhoea in young children.

Your baby will be given two doses - usually at their scheduled two- and three-month visits.

The most common side-effects are mild diarrhoea and irritability.

### About Rotarix®

|                  |                                   |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Type of medicine | Rotavirus vaccine                 |
| Used for         | Prevention of rotavirus infection |
| Also called      | Live attenuated rotavirus vaccine |
| Available as     | Oral suspension                   |

Rotarix® is a vaccine given to prevent gastroenteritis caused by [rotavirus](#). Rotavirus infection can affect people of all ages but it is most common in infants and younger children. The symptoms of rotavirus infection include a high temperature (fever), being sick (vomiting) and loose, watery stools (diarrhoea). The infection typically lasts for 3-8 days, but it can lead to problems such as severe lack of fluid in the body (dehydration) in younger children. Rotavirus infection can easily spread from an infected person to another by close contact. This is because the virus may be on an infected child's hands after they have been to the toilet, or it may be spread by the hands of a person changing an infected child's nappy.

In the UK from July 2013, a vaccine immunisation programme was introduced to protect infants against rotavirus. It provides two doses of the vaccine to babies before they are 6 months of age. The vaccine is given as an oral liquid at the same time as other [routine childhood immunisations](#).

After having this vaccine, your infant's natural defence system will make antibodies against the common types of rotavirus – these antibodies help to protect against rotavirus infection.

## Before your baby is given Rotarix®

Before your baby is given rotavirus vaccine, make sure your doctor knows:

- If your baby has been unwell recently or has a high temperature (fever).
- If your baby has been sick (vomited) or has had loose, watery stools (diarrhoea) recently.
- If your baby has previously had an allergic reaction to a vaccine or medicine.
- If your baby has had a blockage in their bowel, called intussusception.
- If you have been told your baby has a weakened immune system or is being treated with a medicine that can weaken the immune system.
- If whilst pregnant with your baby or whilst breastfeeding you have been given any treatment or medicine that weakens the immune system.

## How Rotarix® is given

- Before your baby is given this vaccine, ask to read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet. The leaflet will give you more information about Rotarix® and will tell you about any side-effects which your child may experience from having it. If you have any questions about the vaccine, ask your doctor or nurse for advice.

- Your baby will be given two doses of vaccine, at least four weeks apart. It is usual for the first to be given at their scheduled two-month visit and the second during their three-month visit.
- Rotavirus vaccine will be given at the beginning of the visit, before any of the other childhood vaccines are given. You will be asked to hold your baby comfortably in a reclined position and the vaccine will be given into their mouth from a small plastic applicator which looks similar to a syringe.
- If your baby spits out the vaccine, they may be given a second dose to replace what has been lost.

## Getting the most from the vaccine

- You can feed your baby as normal, either before or after immunisation. There are no restrictions on feeding with this vaccine.
- If your baby has a high temperature or is acutely unwell at the time of the scheduled immunisation visit, your doctor or nurse may recommend delaying giving the vaccine. This is to make sure the vaccine does not pass through their intestines too quickly or get brought back up (vomited), as this would make it less effective. You will be given an alternative appointment for the vaccination to be given.
- Even if your baby has already had a rotavirus infection, they will still be offered the vaccine. This is to protect them from further rotavirus infection.
- Rotarix® is a live vaccine, which means that a small amount of live virus will be present in your baby's intestines for about two weeks after the vaccination. It is important that you are particularly careful to wash your hands after nappy changes during these two weeks. If your baby is around people with a weakened immune (defence) system during this time, there is a chance that they could develop a rotavirus infection. Try to keep your baby away from people who you know are at risk from infection, or who are frail.

## Can Rotarix® cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below contains some of the ones associated with rotavirus vaccine. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet. Ask the person giving the vaccine for a copy of the leaflet and speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any side-effects become troublesome.

| <b>Common Rotarix® side-effects</b>                           | <b>What can I do if my baby experiences this?</b>  |
|---|--|
| Loose, watery stools (diarrhoea)                              | Make sure your child has plenty to drink. If it is severe or if it continues, speak with your doctor |
| Irritability, wind, tummy (abdominal) pain, skin inflammation | These should soon pass, but speak with your doctor if you are concerned                              |

As with all vaccines, there is a very small risk of an allergic reaction. Contact your doctor straightaway if you have any concerns, or if your child experiences any other symptoms which you think may be due to this vaccine.

## How to store Rotarix®

- It is unlikely that you will be asked to store the vaccine before it is given to your baby. If, however, this does happen, keep it refrigerated until it is needed.
- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.

If you experience side effects, you can report them online through the [Yellow Card website](#).

---

## Further reading

- [Manufacturer's PIL, Rotarix® oral suspension in pre-filled oral applicator](#); GlaxoSmithKline UK, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated March 2022.
- [Medicines Complete BNF 87th Edition](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.

**Disclaimer:** This article is for information only and should not be used for the diagnosis or treatment of medical conditions. Egton Medical Information Systems Limited has used all reasonable care in compiling the information but makes no warranty as to its accuracy. Consult a doctor or other healthcare professional for diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. For details see our [conditions](#).

|                                     |                                 |                           |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Authored by:                        | Peer Reviewed by:<br>Sid Dajani |                           |
| Originally Published:<br>20/11/2023 | Next review date:<br>30/08/2022 | Document ID:<br>doc_28614 |

---

View this article online at: [patient.info/medicine/rotavirus-vaccine-rotarix](https://patient.info/medicine/rotavirus-vaccine-rotarix)

Discuss Rotavirus vaccine (Rotarix) and find more trusted resources at [Patient](#).

---



To find out more visit [www.patientaccess.com](https://www.patientaccess.com)  
or download the app



Follow us

