Vaccination has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other medical Intervention\(^1\). Vaccines help your immune system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause disease.

**What is rotavirus infection?**

Rotavirus infection is a common cause of gastroenteritis (diarrhea and vomiting) in children; approximately 36% of children with rotavirus see a physician, 15% visit an emergency department, and 7% require hospitalization. Rotavirus is caused by a virus that is easily spread by hand-to-mouth from contact with stools of an infected child, such as through the handling of diapers.

Almost all children will have at least one rotavirus infection before they are 5 years of age. It usually affects children between the ages of 6 months and 2 years. When older children and adults get rotavirus infection, they have a milder illness.

First infection usually does not lead to permanent immunity.

The first symptoms of rotavirus infection are usually fever and vomiting, followed by diarrhea and stomach pain. Symptoms appear 1 to 3 days after a person has been infected with the virus. Diarrhea can last from 4 to 8 days. Severe and frequent diarrhea and/or vomiting can lead to dehydration in young children, and this may result in hospitalization and death, if not treated.

A child who is sick with diarrhea or vomiting should not attend day care or have any contact with other children until 48 hours after the diarrhea or vomiting has ended.

Frequent hand washing with soap and water is effective in preventing the spread of rotavirus.

**What is the rotavirus vaccine?**

The rotavirus vaccine is approved by Health Canada and protects against gastroenteritis caused by rotavirus virus. It is only recommended for babies.

The rotavirus vaccine is a live, weakened vaccine that is given by mouth.

Rotavirus vaccine can be given at the same time as other childhood vaccinations.

In the event a baby spits out most of the vaccine dose, a replacement dose should not be given.

The virus from the vaccine may be found in a baby’s stool for at least 10 days after immunization. Parents and caregivers should wash their hands thoroughly after changing diapers.

Rotavirus vaccine does not protect against diarrhea and vomiting caused by other viruses.

**Why should my child get the rotavirus vaccine?**

Immunization is the best way to protect your baby against rotavirus infection that can often be serious. Vaccines help prepare your child’s body to fight potential future exposure to the virus by getting their immune system ready.

The vaccine helps to protect you, your family, and other people in your community.

The rotavirus vaccine is very effective in preventing rotavirus infection.

**Possible side effects of the rotavirus vaccine**

It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get a rotavirus infection. Health Canada approves vaccines based on a review of safety and quality.

Most babies do not have any reactions after they get the rotavirus vaccine. Some may have mild diarrhea or vomiting after being immunized.

Intussusception is a condition that occurs in about 34/100 000 infants per year. Some studies have shown that there is a small increased risk of intussusception in the 7 days following both the first and second doses of rotavirus vaccine (between 1 and 7 cases/100 000 doses). Signs may include a swollen abdomen or tummy, frequent vomiting, and bloody stools. Your baby could seem weak and irritable and

\(^1\) The Public Health Agency of Canada
have several bouts of intense crying. If your baby is showing these signs, you should take your baby to the closest emergency department.

ASA (Aspirin®) should NEVER be given to children because it can cause a severe liver and brain disease called Reye’s Syndrome.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue, or lips. Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department for immediate attention if any reaction occurs after you leave the clinic.

Report any serious or unexpected side-effects to a health care provider.

Who should get the rotavirus vaccine?
The rotavirus vaccine is offered free of charge as part of Manitoba’s routine childhood immunization schedule for infants at 2 months and 4 months of age. The first dose should be given no earlier than 6 weeks of age and before 15 weeks of age. The administration of the 2 doses must be completed by 8 months of age. There should be at least 4 weeks between doses. All infants should get the 2 dose rotavirus vaccine series as per the routine childhood immunization schedule for the best protection against rotavirus infection.

Who should NOT get rotavirus vaccine?
Speak with your health care provider if:
• Your baby has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of rotavirus vaccine or any contents of the vaccine.
• Your baby has a weakened immune system due to disease or medical treatment.
• Your baby has had intussusception, which is a blockage of the intestine that can be treated in a hospital, or has an intestinal disorder that may result in intussusception.

Anyone with a high fever should not be immunized. The vaccine can still be given if the illness is mild, like a cold.

Those who have moderate to severe diarrhea or vomiting should not receive the rotavirus vaccine until they have recovered from their illness.

Your record of protection
Make sure your immunization provider updates your immunization record card or that of your child(ren), after you receive an immunization. Keep the card in a safe place!

Your immunizations or those of your child(ren) will be recorded in Manitoba’s immunization registry. This registry:

- allows the health care provider to find out which immunizations you or your child(ren) have had or need to have;
- may be used to produce immunization records, or notify you or your health care provider if a particular immunization has been missed;
- allows Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living and public health officials to monitor how well vaccines work in preventing disease.

If you need information on the immunizations that you or your child(ren) have received, contact your health care provider.

The Personal Health Information Act protects your information and/or that of your child(ren). You can have your personal health information and/or that of your child(ren) hidden from view from health care providers. For additional information, please contact your local public health office to speak with a public health nurse.

For a listing of public health offices please visit: http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/offices.html.

For more information on the rotavirus vaccine:
• Talk to your health care provider.
• Call Health Links — Info Santé in Winnipeg at 204-788-8200; toll-free elsewhere in Manitoba 1-888-315-9257.
Rotavirus Vaccine

• Or visit:

Manitoba Public Health website
www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/index.html

Public Health Agency of Canada
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im/index-eng.php

Please visit the Vaccine Factsheets and Resources webpage for the most current version:
http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/vaccines.html