

As your healthcare provider,
I recommend rotavirus vaccine...
Please THINK TWICE and vaccinate!!



Photo used courtesy of the CDC.

What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is the leading cause of vomiting and diarrhea in infants and children in the U.S. and around the world. Almost all children are exposed to this virus before the age of 5 and if unvaccinated become infected by age 3.

What's a few extra poopy diapers and some vomit?

Rotavirus can cause projectile vomiting and serious diarrhea. This can lead to dehydration very quickly. Hospitalizations for IV fluids and other treatments are common with rotavirus. Children's little bodies just can't handle it like an adults can. It's a dangerous situation for them.

What could happen if I don't get it?

Please see Michele's story on the back for one example.

What are the signs of dehydration?

Signs of dehydration in babies are dry mouth, no tears when they are crying, and less wet diapers than normal. Babies skin will also appear less plump than normal. If your baby has these symptoms, seek treatment right away.

Does this vaccine hurt my baby?

Not a bit! This is an oral vaccine, which means that it is given by mouth. It has a little bit of a sweet flavor and babies seem to like it. :)

"As first-time parents, we had never even heard of rotavirus until our twin boys got it," says Michele. "Even if I had heard of this disease before, I could not have imagined just how sick it would make my babies."

Michele's twins, William and Andrew, were born 2 months premature in April 2006. After much love, nurturing, and a diet of high-calorie formula to help them gain weight, the boys were thriving. Within a few months, they were healthy, happy infants with no evidence that they had been born early.

"I just wish we had known about this vaccine and had been able to get it to protect our boys."

However, when they were 10 months old, they came down with severe diarrhea and vomiting. "They had so much vomiting and diarrhea that they were like limp little rag dolls," Michele describes. "William's eyes were sunk back in his head, and they both were so weak, they couldn't cry. It was agonizing to watch my children suffer, and I felt helpless to ease their pain."

The doctor immediately recognized rotavirus as the cause of their illnesses. Unfortunately, since the twins were already sick with the disease, vaccination could not help. The rotavirus vaccine had been licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and recommended for all infants by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) only a few months before William and Andrew's birth.

For the next 5 weeks after the boys got sick, Michele and her husband kept constant vigil over them, trying to keep them hydrated. Making sure they drank enough to keep them going was the major challenge. "With the constant vomiting and diarrhea, the boys lost a lot of weight. It was like we were going back to square one again with fragile, premature infants."

If Michele and her husband had not been able to keep the boys hydrated at home by getting them to drink enough, the twins would have had to go to the hospital for IV fluids—a costly strain on the entire family, both emotionally and financially. Fortunately, the boys made a full recovery.

However, weeks of constant worry took a lasting toll on the family. Adding to the stress, the boys could not return to child care until they recovered, and the family had to go through a very difficult process to find a good baby sitter. That's because Michele and her husband both used up the time they could take off from work before the babies were over their illnesses. "I had to hand over my very sick babies to someone else to care for them. I still get choked up and cry when I think about that stressful time," Michele explains.

"I just wish we had known about this vaccine and had been able to get it to protect our boys," says Michele. "I'd encourage parents to talk about this vaccine with their doctor, because it can save children and parents from so much suffering." This story can be found at: <http://1.usa.gov/1mvxDrU>

Interesting RotaVirus Information

- Before the Rotavirus vaccine was available 62,500 children in the U.S. were infected with Rotavirus. Since the vaccine has been available, that number has decreased to 7,500.
- Rotavirus has a cousin called Norovirus that is responsible for outbreaks of similar symptoms in adults, often those in close living quarters, such as a cruise ship.
- It takes less than 100 particles of Rotavirus to spread the disease and it can live outside the body for months.

For additional information on this vaccine and all vaccines please see the following trustworthy resources:

www.vaccine.chop.edu

www.aimtoolkit.org

www.immunize.org

www.shotbyshot.org

www.cdc.gov/vaccines

www.michigan.gov/immunize

If, after reading this information, you still feel vaccination is not right for your child, please follow this advice:

Make sure all health care professionals, including ambulance drivers, emergency rooms and urgent care centers, know your child is not fully vaccinated. It could help them diagnose and treat a vaccine preventable disease.

Symptoms of rotavirus can include **severe diarrhea, vomiting, lack of tears, dry diapers, and weight loss.** **If your child has these symptoms, seek care immediately.**