

Children's HEALTH

Timely Vaccination Is Key To Helping Prevent A Potentially Serious Disease

(NAPSA)—Most parents know about the potential dangers of flu in infants and newborns and the importance of getting them vaccinated. However, many new parents may not realize that rotavirus, a leading cause of severe, dehydrating diarrhea in children, can also be prevented through vaccination.

Rotavirus season begins in late fall, when rotavirus outbreaks begin in the southwest United States and sweep across the country, ending in the Northeast in March and April.

Common symptoms of rotavirus include vomiting, diarrhea and fever. Severity of rotavirus disease can be unpredictable. Many children with rotavirus show little or no symptoms, while some may experience severe, dehydrating diarrhea and vomiting. Rotavirus is highly contagious, and nearly all children are infected at least once before they turn 5 years old.

In the U.S. rotavirus is responsible for up to 70,000 hospitalizations, more than 200,000 emergency room visits and approximately 400,000 doctor visits each year among children under 5. Infectious disease experts agree that vaccination can help prevent symptoms of rotavirus—an oral vaccine is available year-round for babies. The first dose of a three-dose series is given starting at 6 to 12 weeks of age, with subsequent doses given at 4 to 10 week intervals. The third dose should not be given after 32 weeks of age.

“New and expecting parents need to realize how important it is to vaccinate their children against



A vaccine can help prevent a common, highly contagious condition in children.

rotavirus,” explains Dr. Mary Allen Staat, professor of Pediatrics at the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Division of Infectious Diseases. “Fortunately, we have a vaccine that helps protect against common strains of rotavirus and can help prevent potentially serious consequences of rotavirus, such as dehydration.”

ROTATEQ® [rotavirus vaccine, live, oral, pentavalent], from Merck & Co., Inc., is the only pentavalent vaccine available in the United States to help prevent rotavirus, and helps prevent rotavirus gastroenteritis caused by common circulating serotypes G1, G2, G3, and G4, which have been responsible for approximately 90 percent of rotavirus disease in the U.S.

This is especially important since types of rotavirus strains can vary from one rotavirus season to the next, and from region to region, making it difficult to predict the strain to which a child will be exposed. ROTATEQ helps protect against diarrhea and vomiting only if they are caused by rotavirus. It does not protect

against other causes of diarrhea and vomiting. ROTATEQ may not fully protect all infants who get the vaccine.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the oral, three-dose rotavirus vaccine be given during routine well-baby visits at two, four and six months of age, meaning parents do not have to make an extra trip to the doctor’s office to have their children vaccinated.

Children with rotavirus typically experience fever, vomiting and watery diarrhea that can be profuse, which can persist for three to nine days.

Parents should talk to their infant’s doctor to see if vaccination is appropriate for their child.

ROTATEQ should not be administered to infants with a demonstrated history of hypersensitivity to any component of the vaccine. No safety or efficacy data are available for the administration of ROTATEQ to infants who are potentially immunocompromised or to infants with a history of gastrointestinal disorders. Caution is advised when considering whether to administer ROTATEQ to individuals with immunodeficient contacts. In clinical trials, the most common adverse events included diarrhea, vomiting, irritability, otitis media, nasopharyngitis and bronchospasm. In post-marketing experience, cases of intussusception and Kawasaki disease have been reported in infants who have received ROTATEQ.

Prescribing information and patient product information for ROTATEQ is available online at www.rotateq.com.