

## **Rotavirus vaccination programme – Department of Health FAQs**

### ***Why is DH introducing a vaccination programme for rotavirus***

We have accepted expert advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) that vaccinating infants against rotavirus would have a significant impact on reducing gastroenteritis, and that the Department should introduce the vaccine for infants once it could be procured at a cost effective price.

### ***What will the impact of the programme be?***

Each year about 140,000 children in the UK are affected by diarrhoea caused by rotavirus infection, with about 14,000 of these requiring hospital admission. We expect to see the number of vomiting and diarrhoea cases caused by rotavirus cut in half, reducing GP visits and we could see 70 % fewer hospital stays as a result of this immunisation programme. The programme is expected to save the NHS around £20 million per year in England through fewer GP and A&E visits, fewer hospital stays and fewer calls to NHS Direct. (The programme will cost around £25 million per year).

The vaccine, Rotarix, is already used to routinely vaccinate children in the US and several other countries. In the US, studies have shown that rotavirus-related hospital admissions for young children have been cut by more than two thirds since rotavirus vaccination was introduced.

### ***Isn't rotavirus vaccine already available?***

Parents have been able to have their children vaccinated against the virus since 2006 but have to pay for it.

### ***Will there be a marketing campaign – how much will it cost? When will it run? What will it involve?***

Yes, there will be communications in place to publicise the introduction of this programme. The objectives will be:

- to inform and provide parents with the reassurance and confidence they need to get their child vaccinated,
- to maintain awareness amongst parents of the current immunisation programme and remind them of its importance, and
- to encourage and promote healthcare professional endorsement of the rotavirus vaccination programme.

The campaign is expected to cost around £250K in year one of the programme; timing and extent are yet to be determined.

### ***When will the programme start?***

The programme is planned to commence late summer/autumn 2013.

### ***When will there be further information for health professionals detailing the arrangements for the programme? E.g. CMO letter***

Further information will be published in Spring 2013.

### ***When should children receive the vaccine?***

All infants aged 6 weeks to 3 months at the start of the programme should be offered vaccination. The course must be completed by 24 weeks of age.

The vaccine will be given to infants as part of the existing Childhood Immunisation Programme. It will be given on two separate occasions when your child is two months old, then again at three months of age.

***How will the vaccine be administered?***

The vaccine will be administered orally as drops.

***How many children will be eligible for vaccination in a year?***

Around 840,000 infants will be offered the vaccine each year.

***Can parents opt out if they wish?***

Yes.

***How many infants will be immunised each year?***

The UK has a high uptake of childhood vaccines and we expect the same for rotavirus vaccination. This could be around 800,000 infants every year.

***Why will there be no catch-up programme?***

The vaccine is not licensed for infants aged over 6 months; older children have very often already had a rotavirus infection as so there is no point vaccinating them.

***What vaccine should be used?***

Rotarix®, manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline, will be supplied for the childhood programme.

***Is the vaccine being centrally supplied?***

Yes.

***How/when can I order the vaccine?***

Arrangements will be set out when we publish further information in Spring 2013.