

Paediatric Society Position Statement on Rotavirus Immunisation

The Paediatric Society of New Zealand recommends

- The New Zealand Government should as an urgent priority implement a funded infant rotavirus vaccine within the core immunisation schedule

The Paediatric Society of New Zealand notes

- Hospitalisation for infectious illnesses are increasing in New Zealand, increasing by 51.3% (age-standardised rate) from 1989-2008, while non-infectious disease admissions rose by only 7.3%[1]
- Enteric infections along with lower respiratory tract infections, skin and soft tissue infections, collectively account for 57.2% of total infectious disease admissions 2004-8. Enteric infection admission rates almost doubled from 1989-2008[1].
- Infectious illness admission rates, including enteric infections, are associated with deprivation and ethnicity[1].
- Gastroenteritis (diarrhoea and vomiting) is the most common medically preventable cause of acute hospital admission in New Zealand children, accounting for on average 5,200 admissions per annum, and for all-cause acute admissions exceeded only by injury/poisoning[2]
- Gastroenteritis (particularly in very young children or those with other medical issues) can result in significant medical complications including brain damage resulting in long term disability or death
- Rotavirus is a preventable cause of infectious gastroenteritis[3]
- In New Zealand, Rotavirus accounts for over 42% of gastroenteritis admissions in children under 3 years of age[4]
- Rotavirus gastroenteritis occurs in all infants and children, at least once in early life.
- Rotavirus gastroenteritis is most severe in infants in the first year, and in particular the first months of life[2]
- In New Zealand, Rotavirus gastroenteritis admissions are significantly more likely in areas of socioeconomic deprivation[2]
- The World Health Organisation recommends universal rotavirus immunisation in infancy[3]
- Rotavirus immunisation is part of the national core childhood immunisation schedule in many countries, and was implemented as such in Australia in 2007[3, 5, 6]
- International (including Australian) evidence demonstrates vaccine safety, efficacy and effectiveness, with absolute reductions in rotavirus infection, morbidity and mortality[5-11].
- In the setting of universal rotavirus immunisation, there is also reduction in all cause diarrhoeal hospitalisation rates, and in admission rates for those not immunised, which supports a herd immunity benefit of this vaccine[6, 10, 11]
- If funded, there is potential for the opportunity for uptake of rotavirus vaccine (protection against a common and visible condition) to enhance uptake of the remainder of the core immunisation schedule (protection against generally uncommon and invisible conditions)[12, 13]
- International Cost Utility Analyses support the use of rotavirus vaccine, including in areas as diverse as Denmark and Egypt and using a broad

societal model, showing a return on investment adding positive economic value[14, 15]

- The Royal Australasian College of Physicians; Paediatrics and Child Health Divisional Committee support this statement

The Paediatric Society of New Zealand believes

- Children have the right to good quality health care – the best health care possible[16]
- All children should have access to systems, tools, processes, legislation, policy and medications which promote child health and reduce childhood morbidity and mortality, including ambulatory sensitive hospitalisations.
- As endorsed by the United Nations, the principle of first call means that children have first call on resourcing in a resource-constrained environment[17]
- Immunisation is among the most successful and cost-effective public health interventions, which prevents needless suffering through sickness, disability and death[18, 19]
- Consistent with the Ministry of Health, where there are health inequalities, priority should be given to reducing inequalities whilst improving overall health[20]
- Obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi include protection, ensuring Maori have at least the same level of health as non-Maori[21]

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