



**Australian Government**

**Australian Institute of  
Health and Welfare**

# Rotavirus in Australia

## Quick facts

Vaccination has been effective in preventing the seasonal peaks of hospitalisation with gastroenteritis.

Young children and older adults are particularly at risk of serious illness due to rotavirus.

## What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a common cause of severe gastroenteritis in infants and young children, but may affect people of any age. It is believed that nearly all children have been exposed to the virus by the time they turn 3 years old.

The main symptom of rotavirus is watery diarrhoea, lasting up to 7 days. Fever, stomach pain and vomiting may also occur. Infants can become severely dehydrated, resulting in hospitalisation. Older adults can experience severe symptoms too.

## Vaccination against rotavirus

Vaccination against rotavirus was first included in the Australian National Immunisation Program (NIP) in 2007. Rotavirus vaccination is available on the NIP for young infants.

In December 2016, 87.5% of Australian 1 year olds were vaccinated against rotavirus; however, vaccination rates vary by where a child lives.

## Rotavirus notifications

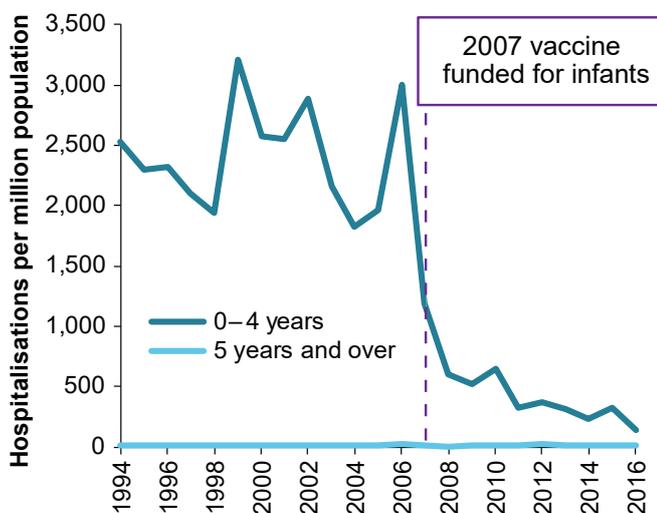
Rotavirus recently became notifiable in Australia, which means that diagnosed cases of rotavirus are reported to state or territory health departments.

Because rotavirus notification commenced very recently, data on the number of notifications is not yet available for analysis.

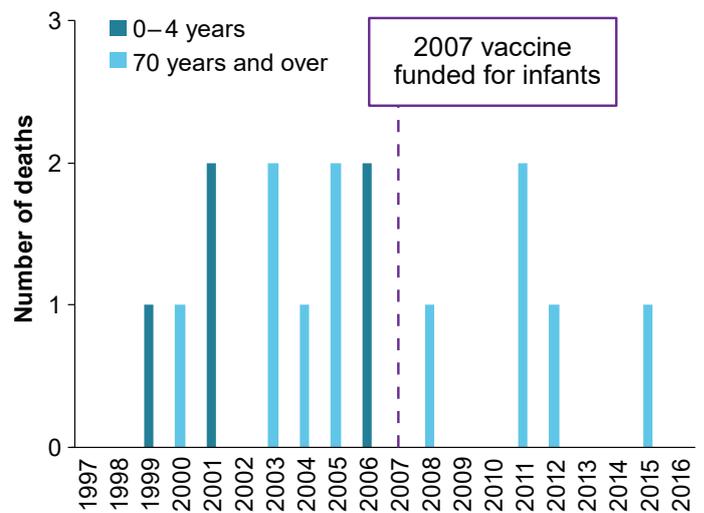
## Hospitalisations and deaths due to rotavirus

In 2016, there were 426 hospital admissions for rotavirus in Australia, of which 216 (51%) were of children aged under 5 years. The rate of hospital admissions for rotavirus in young children dropped considerably after the introduction of rotavirus vaccination on the National Immunisation Program in 2007 (left figure). Hospitalisations in other age groups also decreased, suggesting that rotavirus vaccines have some protective effect on the population overall.

Between 1997 and 2016, rotavirus caused 16 deaths in Australia. All deaths were either in children aged 0–4 years or people aged over 70 years. In children aged less than 5 years there were 5 deaths between 1999 and 2006, compared to zero since the vaccine was introduced.



Source: AIHW analysis of National Hospital Morbidity Database.



Source: AIHW analysis of National Mortality Database.

This fact sheet is part of the [Vaccine-preventable diseases](#) release. For more information see [Immunisation](#) on the AIHW website.

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