

ROTAVIRUS

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a virus that causes an infection of the intestinal tract which leads to severe diarrhea. Rotavirus is highly contagious and is the most common cause of severe diarrhea in infants and young children. The highest rates of illness occur among infants and young children, and most children in the United States are infected by 2 years of age. Adults can also be infected, although the disease tends to be more mild.

How is it spread?

- Primary route of transmission is fecal-oral.
- Eating or drinking food or water contaminated by persons infected with rotavirus.
- Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with rotavirus and then touching their mouth before handwashing.
- Also through direct contact with persons infected with rotavirus.

How is it treated?

Typically, treatment consists of preventing dehydration by replacing fluids lost due to diarrhea and/or vomiting. Occasionally, symptoms can be severe and hospitalization may be necessary.

How can we prevent Rotavirus?

- There are two vaccines available to prevent rotavirus infection. RotaTeq is given in three doses at 2, 4, and 6 months. Rotarix is given in two doses at 2 and 4 months. All doses of rotavirus vaccine should be administered by 8 months of age, and are given orally.
- Frequent hand washing and good hand hygiene especially after using the toilet, changing diapers or before preparing, serving or eating food.
- Proper food storage and preparation.

SYMPTOMS OF ROTAVIRUS

Typically occurs about 2 days after exposure to the virus

- Watery diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Abdominal pain

Symptoms usually last between 3-8 days

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