

ROTAVIRUS

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Rotavirus?

A virus that causes an infection of the intestinal tract that leads to severe diarrhea. Rotavirus is highly contagious and 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, though disease tends to be mild.

How is it spread?

- Usually spread from hand to mouth
- 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.
- Having 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 is required for intravenous fluids.

How can we prevent Rotavirus?

- A vaccine called RotaTeq is recommended for infants beginning at 6 weeks of age. It is a series of 3 doses administered orally at 2, 4, and 6 months of age. If the series is not started by 12 weeks of age then it cannot be given.
- 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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