



Rotavirus Fact Sheet

What is Rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a viral infection that infects the gut. It is the most common cause of diarrhea in infants and young children and usually occurs in the winter and spring.

Who gets Rotavirus?

Rotavirus occurs most often in unvaccinated children aged 3 to 35 months old, although anyone can become infected. Those in childcare centers or other settings with many young children are most at risk for infection.

How is the virus spread?

The fecal-oral route is the most common way Rotavirus is spread. It can also be spread by inhaling infected respiratory droplets or by touching contaminated objects.

What are the symptoms?

People infected with Rotavirus may have fever, upset stomach, abdominal cramping, vomiting and watery, non-bloody diarrhea, that can last 3 to 8 days. There may also be a cough or runny nose. Some can develop loss of appetite and dehydration which is dangerous for infants and children. Some infected people may not have symptoms.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear 2 days after infection and can last up to 8 days, with an average of 4-6 days.

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Rotavirus Fact Sheet

How long can an infected person spread the virus?

Infected individuals infect others when they have symptoms and during the first 3 days after they recover. The infectious period is usually less than one week. However, immunocompromised persons may excrete the virus for months.

Can a person become re-infected with the virus?

Yes, reinfection can occur if the person receives a high dose of virus or if they are immunosuppressed. Reinfections are usually milder than first infections.

What is the treatment?

There is no specific medicine used for treatment. Treatment involves management of symptoms by ensuring adequate fluid and nutrition intake.

What can be done to prevent the spread of Rotavirus?

Everyone should carefully wash their hands with soap and running water after using the toilet or handling dirty diapers, and before eating or preparing food. The virus survives for long periods on hard surfaces in contaminated water and on hands. It is relatively resistant to commonly used disinfectants but is inactivated by chlorine (bleach).

Exclude any child with diarrhea from childcare until symptoms are gone.

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Vaccination

The rotavirus vaccine is very effective in preventing rotavirus gastroenteritis. The US Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends routine vaccination of infants with either of 2 available vaccines:

- RotaTeq® (RV5), licensed in 2006, is given in 3 doses at ages 2, 4 and 6 months
- Rotarix® (RV1), licensed in 2008, is given in 2 doses at ages 2 and 4 months.

Children should receive all doses of rotavirus vaccine before they turn 8 months old. These vaccines differ in how they are made and when they are given, but both are given orally, and both provide protection against the disease.

*For further information, contact the
Oklahoma City-County Health
Department (405) 425-4437*

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