

FACT SHEET

Rotavirus

Rotavirus is a highly contagious virus involving the stomach and intestines. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, rotavirus is the most common cause of severe diarrhea and dehydration in infants and children worldwide. Prior to the creation of rotavirus vaccines, the United States had approximately 55,000-70,000 children hospitalized per year from rotavirus; 20-60 deaths per year; and over 500,000 deaths worldwide. <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/surv-manual/chpt13-rotavirus.html>

- Cause:** Caused by triple-shelled rotaviruses that damage the lining of the small intestine of the infected person.
- Symptoms:** Fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain followed by watery diarrhea lasting three - eight days.
- Spread:** Transmission occurs by tiny, invisible amounts of fecal matter enter through the mouth from contaminated water and eating food contaminated with the virus. Infants and children are often infected by putting contaminated toys, caregivers' hands and other objects into their mouths. If not disinfected it can remain alive for weeks to months in the environment. It has also been found in low titers of respiratory tract secretions and other body fluids. In the United States, rotavirus often occurs in the winter and early spring months. In the United States, most children are affected at some point, by the age of 5 years. Adults can be infected, but symptoms are milder.
- Incubation:** Is usually two days after being exposed. Infected persons can pass it on to others from 2 days before and 10 days after symptoms begin.
- Contagious:** Highly infectious.
- Precautions:** Always wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, and before preparing and eating food.
- Prevention:** Rotavirus vaccine stimulates the body's immune system, helping to protect you once exposed to the virus. Two or three immunizations are required before the age of eight months for full protection.
- Diagnosis:** Laboratory tests are done on fecal specimens to detect and confirm rotavirus infection.
- Treatment:** There is no specific treatment for illness. It is important to keep infants properly hydrated and prevent dehydration. If symptoms of

dehydration appear, seek medical treatment immediately as severe cases may require hospitalization and administration of IV fluids.
<http://www.cdc.gov/rotavirus/about/treatment.html>

Recommendations:

Rotavirus vaccine for infants is recommended; depending on which vaccine your provider has, a 2-dose or 3-doses regimen is required by **no later than 8 months of age**. Call your primary care provider for information on recent recommendations.

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/downloads/rotavirus.pdf>