

# ROTAVIRUS

## FACT SHEET

### What is Rotavirus?

Rotavirus is the most common cause of severe diarrhea among children, resulting in the hospitalization of approximately 55,000 children each year in the United States and the death of over 600,000 children annually worldwide.

### Symptoms of Rotavirus

Children with Rotavirus infection may have fever, nausea, and vomiting, often followed by abdominal cramps and frequent, watery diarrhea for around 3-8 days. The incubation period between exposure and the onset of symptoms is about 2 days.

Kids may also have a cough and runny nose. As with many viruses, some Rotavirus infections cause few or no symptoms, especially in adults.



Call your child's physician if your child:

- Has severe or bloody diarrhea
- Has frequent episodes of vomiting for more than three hours
- Has a temperature of 102 F (38.9 C) or higher
- Seems lethargic, irritable or in pain
- Has signs or symptoms of dehydration — dry mouth, crying without tears, little or no urination, unusual sleepiness or unresponsiveness

### How do you get Rotavirus?

Rotavirus is extremely contagious. Only a very few particles are needed to transmit infection, and they can live on surfaces for many hours. The virus passes in the stool of infected persons before and after they have symptoms of the illness. Kids can become infected if they put their fingers in their mouths after touching something that has been contaminated. Usually this happens when kids don't wash their hands often enough, especially before eating and after using the toilet.

People who care for children, including health-care and child-care workers, can also spread the virus, especially if they do not wash their hands after changing diapers.

### Diagnosis and Treatment of Rotavirus

Rotavirus is often diagnosed based on symptoms and a physical exam. A stool sample may be analyzed in a lab to confirm the diagnosis. There's no specific treatment for Rotavirus infection. Antibiotics won't help a viral infection. Usually, the infection resolves itself within three to eight days. Preventing dehydration is the biggest concern.

### How can I help prevent the spread of Rotavirus?

Vaccines can help prevent Rotavirus infection in your infant. In order to be most effective, the first dose of the vaccine should be administered within 15 weeks of birth. Frequent hand washing, using hand sanitizer and disinfecting contaminated surfaces are the best tools to limit the spread of Rotavirus infection.

Kids who are infected should stay home from child-care and other public places until they are symptom free for 48 hours. In hospitals, Rotavirus outbreaks are controlled by isolating infected patients and adhering to strict hand-washing procedures.

**For more information, contact a Public Health Nurse at the City-County Health Department at 454-6950 or visit [www.cchdmt.org](http://www.cchdmt.org) or [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)**