

Rotavirus

What is Rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a viral infection. Symptoms usually start about 2 days after a person is exposed to rotavirus.

How is Rotavirus Spread?

In general, rotavirus is very contagious (easily spread), and is most common in infants and young children. Older children and adults and can also become infected.

People who are infected with rotavirus shed the virus in their feces (poop). The virus spreads when it enters a person's mouth to cause infection. Rotavirus can be spread by contaminated:

- hands
- objects (toys, surfaces)
- food
- water.

What are the Symptoms of Rotavirus?

Infants, children and those who have a weakened immune system who get infected may have:

- severe watery diarrhea, often with vomiting (throwing up) that can last from 3 to 8 days
- fever
- loss of appetite
- dehydration (loss of body fluids)
- fever
- abdominal (belly) pain.

In older children and adults, a rotavirus infection may cause only mild symptoms or none at all.

In infants and younger children, loss of appetite and dehydration can be dangerous.

When Should You Call Your Health Care Provider?

Call your health care provider if you have:

- severe or bloody diarrhea
- temperature of 101 F or higher
- lethargy, irritability or abdominal pain
- signs of dehydration (dry mouth, crying without tears, little or no urine and unusual sleepiness).

How is Rotavirus Found?

Your health care provider will review your symptoms and give you a physical exam. A stool sample may be checked in a lab to confirm the diagnosis.

How is Rotavirus Treated?

There is no specific medicine to treat rotavirus infection, but your doctor may recommend medicine to treat the symptoms.

Antibiotics will not help because they fight bacteria, not viruses.

How Can Rotavirus be Prevented?

Getting a rotavirus vaccine is the best way to protect against rotavirus disease.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that infants get one of the 2 available vaccines:

- ❑ RotaTeq[®], which is given in 3 doses at ages 2 months, 4 months, and 6 months
- ❑ Rotarix[®], which is given in 2 doses at ages 2 months and 4 months.

The first dose of either vaccine should be given before a child is 15 weeks old. Children should receive all doses of rotavirus vaccine before they turn 8 months old.

Both vaccines are given by putting drops in the child's mouth.

How Can You Keep From Spreading the Disease?

- To prevent the spread of rotavirus infection to other family members and close contacts, children and caregivers must **wash their hands well and often**.
 - It is especially important to wash hands after diaper changes, after using the bathroom and before touching or eating food.

- Wash any toys in your home with soap and water, especially if they are contaminated with stool.
- Use a bleach-based cleaner to wash surfaces.
- Avoid any food or water that is thought to be contaminated.

In the hospital, children with rotavirus need to stay in their room to prevent the spread of infection to others.

Children with rotavirus may return to group activities, including daycare, when all of the following occur:

- fever and vomiting are gone
- stool is not watery or leaking out of diapers
- the child is acting normally.

Information adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.