

FACT SHEET

Rotavirus

What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus causes an infection of the intestinal tract which leads to severe diarrhea as well as vomiting. Rotavirus is highly contagious and is the most common cause of severe diarrhea in infants and young children. Most children in the U.S. are infected with rotavirus by the age of two. Adults can also be infected, but the disease tends to be very mild.

How is it spread?

You can get infected with rotavirus by putting unwashed hands that are contaminated with poop into your mouth, touching contaminated objects or surfaces then putting your fingers in your mouth, or eating contaminated food.

People who are infected with rotavirus shed the virus in their poop. People shed rotavirus the most, and are most contagious, while they have symptoms and during the first three days after they recover. People with rotavirus can also infect others before they have symptoms.

What are the symptoms?

- Watery diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Abdominal pain

How is it prevented?

There is a vaccine (given orally) available for infants to prevent rotavirus. Hand washing and good hand hygiene are extremely important for prevention, especially after using the toilet, changing diapers, or before preparing, serving, or eating food.

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 may be necessary.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.