

ROTAVIRUS FACT SHEET

What is Rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a virus that commonly causes inflammation of the stomach and intestines (acute gastroenteritis).

Who can get Rotavirus disease?

Anyone. However, it is most common in infants and young children. A person may be infected more than once. Nearly every child who is not vaccinated as an infant is expected to be infected within the first years of life.

What are the symptoms of Rotavirus disease?

Children with rotavirus disease may have severe watery diarrhea, vomiting, fever, abdominal pain, and loss of appetite. Vomiting and diarrhea can lead to dehydration. Signs of dehydration include decreased urination, dry mouth and throat, and feeling dizzy when standing up. A child who is dehydrated may have few or no tears when crying and be unusually sleepy or fussy. Usually a person's first infection with rotavirus tends to cause the most severe symptoms. Adults who get rotavirus disease tend to have milder symptoms.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually begin 2 days after a person is exposed to rotavirus.

How does Rotavirus disease spread?

The virus is shed in the stool of an infected person. The virus can spread when an uninfected person touches contaminated surfaces or objects, such as toys, doorknobs, tables, and counters and then their mouth, or consumes contaminated food or drink. The disease

commonly spreads in families, hospitals, and childcare centers. A person with rotavirus disease is most likely to spread the virus from the time they are sick through the first 3 days after they recover.

Is there a vaccine for Rotavirus?

Yes. The vaccine is highly effective at preventing severe rotavirus disease in infants and young children. The vaccine is given orally starting at age 2 months as a series of 2 doses or 3 doses, depending on the specific type.

How can the spread of Rotavirus be prevented?

The virus spreads so easily that frequent handwashing with soap and water is important, but not sufficient for controlling the spread of the disease. Rotavirus vaccination is the best way to protect children against rotavirus disease.

How is Rotavirus disease treated?

There is no specific treatment for the virus. A person usually recovers within 3–8 days with bed rest and by drinking an adequate amount of fluids. Some children with rotavirus disease may require hospitalization to receive treatment for dehydration.

Where can I get more information?

Information about rotavirus disease and other related health topics can be found at www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit www.doh.dc.gov or call (202) 442-9371.