

What is it?

Rotavirus is a common source of viral infection among newborns, young children and the elderly.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of rotavirus begin with a fever and vomiting followed by diarrhea. This may last anywhere from 4-6 days and can lead to dehydration.

How is it spread?

Humans are the most likely reservoir for rotavirus. It is found in the stool of an infected person and can be transmitted before the diarrhea begins and up to eight days after. It spreads through fecal-oral route, for example, if a child puts items in his mouth that are contaminated with stool such as toys or unwashed hands. The virus can also spread through the droplets from talking, sneezing or coughing, or by consuming contaminated food or water.

How is it treated?

There is no treatment for rotavirus. In order to prevent dehydration, fluid replacement is important. If an infected person is experiencing signs of dehydration such as sunken eyes, dry skin, dry mouth or decreased urination they should seek medical attention from their physician or health care provider.

What can I do to prevent it?

- Immunize infants. Rotavirus vaccine is available free of charge for all babies.
- You can prevent getting or spreading rotavirus by thoroughly washing your hands before and after preparing food, after using the washroom, after changing diapers and before and after visiting a daycare or health care facility.
- Infected persons should be excluded from work/daycare/school until at least 24 hours after the illness has ended.
- Diapers and other items contaminated with feces should be disposed of carefully.
- Clean and sanitize diaper changing areas with chlorine and water after each use and other frequently touched surfaces, especially in washrooms, at least once per day or as often as necessary.

Other Questions?

Talk to your health care provider or call our Communicable Disease Program at 613-966-5500 x349. Toll Free 1-800-267-2803 | TTY Dial 711 (1-800-267-6511) | www.hpepublichealth.ca

References

- Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors, Rotavirus
- Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, Rotavirus, May 2012

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