

FactSheet

Para Su Información

Rotavirus

What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is the most common cause of severe diarrhea among children, resulting in the hospitalization of about 55,000 children each year in the United States and the death of over 600,000 children annually worldwide. The disease has a characteristic wheel-like appearance when viewed by electron microscopy (the name rotavirus is derived from the Latin rota, meaning “wheel”).

Who gets rotavirus?

The peak age for symptomatic rotavirus infection is 6 to 24 months. The disease is highly contagious, and contact with infected patients in the 6- to 24-month age group constitutes the greatest risk factor for disease acquisition. The immune-compromised child is at risk for developing chronic diarrhea.

How is the virus spread?

The most common mode of transmission is the fecal-oral route, but rotavirus may also be transmitted through contaminated fomites.

What are the symptoms of rotavirus?

The disease is characterized by vomiting and watery diarrhea for 3 to 8 days; fever and abdominal pain occur frequently.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The first symptoms usually appear within one to three days after exposure.

How long can an infected person spread the virus?

The infectious period is usually less than 1 week, paralleling diarrhea that usually ceases in 4 to 5 days. However, immune compromised patients may excrete the virus for months.

Can a person get rotavirus again?

Immunity after infection is incomplete, but repeat infections tend to be less severe than the original infection.

What is the treatment for rotavirus?

For people with healthy immune systems, rotavirus gastroenteritis is a self-limited illness, lasting for only a few days. Treatment is nonspecific and consists of oral rehydration therapy to prevent dehydration. About one in 40 children with rotavirus gastroenteritis will require hospitalization for intravenous fluids.

How can the spread of rotavirus be stopped?

The infected child should be kept out of the child-care or preschool setting as long as diarrhea or vomiting is present. Children’s hands should be washed after use of the toilet, and before meals and snacks. Shared surfaces and toys should be disinfected on a daily basis with a freshly prepared solution of commercially available cleanser (detergents, disinfectant detergents, or chemical germicides.) Although, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved a live virus vaccine in 1998, it is no longer recommended.

Where can I get more information?

Contact your doctor or the Southern Nevada Health District, Office of Epidemiology at (702) 759-1300.



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