

ROTAVIRUS

Diarrhea caused by rotavirus is common in infants and young children during the winter months. It can spread quickly to others, including adult caregivers, in childcare settings.

CAUSE Rotaviruses.

SYMPTOMS Vomiting, fever, and watery diarrhea. Sometimes a cough, runny nose, or ear infection is present. Symptoms usually last 3 to 8 days. Children with rotavirus diarrhea are sometimes hospitalized because of dehydration.

SPREAD Rotaviruses leave the body through the stool of an infected person and enter another person when hands, food, or objects (such as toys) contaminated with stool are placed in the mouth. Spread can occur when people do not wash their hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Also, when a person infected with rotavirus coughs or sneezes tiny droplets into the air, and another person breathes them in.

INCUBATION It takes about 1 to 4 days from the time a person is exposed until symptoms begin.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD From 1 to 2 days before and until three weeks after symptoms began.

EXCLUSION Childcare: Until 24 hours after diarrhea has stopped.

School: None, unless the child is not feeling well and/or has diarrhea and needs to use the bathroom frequently. Exclusion may be necessary during outbreaks.

DIAGNOSIS Recommend parents/guardians call their health care provider if their child has the symptoms of rotavirus infection. There is a lab test to detect the virus in the stool.

TREATMENT No specific treatment is available.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Rotavirus vaccine is recommended for all children 6 weeks of age and older. There are two vaccine options (one is given by mouth as a three-dose series and the other is given orally as a two-dose series).
- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing and coughing or cough/sneeze into your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues in the trash.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after using the toilet, changing diapers, touching nasal secretions, and before preparing or eating food. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.** Staff should closely monitor handwashing of all children after they have used the bathroom or have been diapered.
- Clean and disinfect diapering area and potty chairs after each use. Clean and disinfect bathroom toilets, sinks, and toys at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).

PREVENTION/CONTROL (CONTINUED)

- Clean and disinfect diapering area and potty chairs after each use. Clean and disinfect bathroom toilets, sinks, and toys at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.