



## Rotavirus Infection

### What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a virus that causes severe diarrhea and vomiting. Approximately 1 in 5 cases of all “stomach flu” in children are caused by rotavirus. This infection can be serious, leading to dehydration (loss of body fluid) especially for babies and young children. A previous infection does not usually protect a child from getting the disease again.

### What are the symptoms?

Rotavirus can cause fever, diarrhea, vomiting and stomach pain. Symptoms usually appear 1 to 3 days after getting the virus. Diarrhea and vomiting may last for 3 to 8 days. Children may stop eating and drinking while they are sick. Frequent watery diarrhea and/or vomiting can lead to serious illness in young children which may require the child to be admitted to a hospital for care.

### How is rotavirus spread?

The virus is in the stool of people who become ill. Rotavirus is spread easily from hand to mouth by dirty diapers, toys, changing tables, or doorknobs that have a small amount of the stool on them. A person who has rotavirus can start to spread the infection before they start to feel sick, and can continue spreading it until 24 hours or longer after their diarrhea stops.

### How is rotavirus diagnosed?

A health care provider will ask you about your child’s symptoms and for you to collect a sample of the child’s stool for testing.

### Who is at risk of rotavirus infections?

Almost all children who have not been immunized will have at least one rotavirus infection before they are 5 years of age. It usually affects children between the ages of 6 months and 2 years.

### How can rotavirus infection be prevented?

The rotavirus vaccine is the best way to protect against rotavirus disease.

To help prevent the spread of rotavirus, wash your hands thoroughly and often, especially after using the toilet, changing your child’s diapers, or helping your child to use the toilet.

### How is rotavirus infection treated?

Most children recover within 3 to 8 days. Dehydration is the most common complication, and may require a visit to the emergency department or hospitalization.

### What is the public health response?

If an outbreak of rotavirus is occurring, Public Health staff may try to find out how the infection started, identify people who may be at risk, and suggest actions to help stop the spread of the infection (i.e. asking infected workers or children in daycare settings to stay home).

### Further Information:

For additional information, contact your health-care provider, local [Public Health office](#) or Tele-Care 811.

Useful websites:

- Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness and Promotion <http://www.immunize.cpha.ca>
- Public Health Agency of Canada <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca>
- Canadian Pediatric Society <http://www.cps.ca>