

What is rotavirus and its symptoms?

It is a virus that can cause diarrhea, which usually starts with, or is accompanied by, vomiting and/or a low-grade fever (more than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit).

How do you get rotavirus?

Most human infections result from hand-to-mouth contact with an infected person's stools. The virus is present in the stools during the illness and can last for up to 8 days after the start of symptoms. Rotavirus can be found on toys and hard surfaces in the home and child care centers. This means the toys, furniture, or the floor may serve as a transmission source. Coughing or sneezing may also spread the virus. Rotavirus is easily spread among family members or children in child care. Rotavirus is the most common intestinal infection in child-care settings. The time from exposure to illness in a child is usually 1 - 3 days.

How is rotavirus infection diagnosed?

Your doctor may collect a rectal swab or a stool sample from the child.

What is the treatment for rotavirus?

There is none. Fluids and sometimes intravenous (IV) fluids are given to prevent or treat dehydration.

Who gets rotavirus?

Anyone. Diarrhea is uncommon in infected infants less than 3 months old. It is most common in infants between of 6 and 24 months old. By age 3, most children have had rotavirus and are immune, or protected, from the virus. Persons who are immune-compromised, such as those receiving chemotherapy for cancer or who have HIV or AIDS, may have lost their immunity and could be at risk of getting sick from rotavirus.

What can be done to stop the spread of rotavirus?

The virus can live for a long time on hard surfaces, in unclean water, and on hands. It is best killed by bleach. Dressing infants with overalls to cover diapers has been shown to lessen spread of the virus. Hand washing is important after using the bathroom and changing diapers. Make sure child's hands are washed after using the bathroom or having diapers changed. Children with diarrhea should be kept out of preschool or child care. Frequent handwashing with soap and warm water of the infants or children and all of their caregivers is most important in controlling and preventing the spread of rotavirus.

Is there a vaccine for rotavirus?

Yes. An oral vaccine is available for use in children. The vaccine is for infants. Babies should receive three doses of the oral vaccine at two, four, and six months of age. If you have additional vaccine questions contact your health care provider.