



About Rotavirus

What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a highly contagious virus that infects nearly all children by their fifth birthday. Each year in the United States, rotavirus is responsible for an estimated:

- 250,000 emergency room visits,*
- 410,000 visits to doctor's offices,*
- 20-60 deaths* and
- up to 70,000 hospitalizations,*

*among infants and young children under five years of age

What are the symptoms?

Rotavirus symptoms include fever, vomiting, and watery diarrhea. Although symptoms vary, children may experience fever, upset stomach and vomiting, along with frequent watery diarrhea, sometimes multiple times a day. Symptoms typically last three to nine days.

Who gets rotavirus?

Rotavirus disease affects children of all socioeconomic groups no matter where they live. However, the highest rates of infection generally occur in children between the ages of six months and 24 months, who are also at the greatest risk for severe disease. During the first few years of life, a child typically has several episodes of rotavirus. Children gradually develop immunity against different strains of the virus after several infections.

How is rotavirus transmitted?

Rotavirus is highly contagious and is typically spread through fecal-oral transmission (e.g. ingestion of contaminated food and water, contact with contaminated surfaces like toys). Infection can occur even in places where good standards of hygiene are practiced.

Where does rotavirus occur?

The incidence of rotavirus infection is similar in both industrialized and developing countries around the world, suggesting that differences in environment (e.g., water, hygiene or sanitation) do not affect incidence.

When do children get rotavirus?

In moderate climates (like the United States), rotavirus infections peak in winter months; however, there is less seasonal variation in tropical climates.

What can be done for a child with rotavirus?

Children with rotavirus typically receive supportive treatment that manages symptoms and complications of the disease. For example, dehydration, a potential complication of rotavirus infection, is often treated through oral rehydration therapy. In the most serious cases, frequent vomiting makes oral rehydration difficult and can lead to the need for fluids to be given intravenously at the hospital.