



# 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.

## School health and childcare provider information

### Cause

Rotaviruses.

### Symptoms

Vomiting, fever, stomach pain, and watery diarrhea. Symptoms usually last 3 to 7 days. Children with rotavirus diarrhea are sometimes hospitalized because of dehydration. Symptoms include decreased urination, dizziness, crying with few tears, sleepiness or fussiness.

### 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.

### Incubation

It takes less than 48 hours from the time a person is exposed until symptoms begin.

### Contagious period

From several days before illness and at least 10 days 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.

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## Treatment

No specific treatment is available. Oral or parenteral fluids and electrolytes may be given to treat dehydration.

## Prevention

- Rotavirus vaccine is recommended for all children 6 weeks of age and older. There are two oral vaccination options. Two doses given at 2 months and 4 months, or three doses given at 2 months, 4 months, and 6 months. Vaccination should not be given after 8 months of age.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after using the toilet, changing diapers, 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).
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled.

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

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