

ROTAVIRUS

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What You Should Know About Rotavirus

Rotavirus is the most common cause of severe diarrhea and dehydration among children.

Each year 55,000 children in the United States are hospitalized with Rotavirus.

Almost all children get a Rotavirus infection by the time they are 4 or 5 years old.

*Center For Disease Control
2001*

WHAT IS ROTAVIRUS?

Rotavirus is a type of illness (gastroenteritis) caused by a particular flu virus. It usually occurs during the winter months. Symptoms include vomiting, fever and watery diarrhea. Occasionally, there may also be a cough or runny nose. It often starts suddenly and can last 3-8 days.

HOW IS ROTAVIRUS SPREAD?

Rotavirus infections can be highly contagious. Children and adults can become infected by coming in direct contact with the virus in the feces of an infected child and then passing that virus to the mouth. In most cases, another child or adult touches a surface that has been contaminated and then touches his or her mouth. A child with rotavirus may be contagious before and after symptoms appear.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Rotavirus is a very common virus that affects all children. However, it most often affects the very young—those between six and 24 months old. Children in daycare settings are at an increased risk of getting Rotavirus. Children are also at a higher risk during the winter months.

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What you can do to prevent the spread of Rotavirus:

- Rotavirus is easily spread from one person to another. Always wash your hands with warm water and soap directly before touching your baby, and make certain others do the same.
- It is very important to wash your hands carefully every time you change your child's diapers or helping older children use the bathroom.
- Make sure your children wash their hands every time they use the bathroom.
- Stay away from your child if you have diarrhea until these symptoms are gone.
- Try to keep older brothers and sisters away from the child as much as possible if they have diarrhea until these symptoms are gone.

What you can do if your child is diagnosed with Rotavirus:

- When your child has rotavirus he/she can quickly become dehydrated from loss of water and electrolytes due to vomiting and diarrhea. Check for signs of dehydration including: dry lips and tongue, dry skin, sunken eyes, fewer than six wet diapers a day, or (in an older child) too few trips to the bathroom to urinate. Call your pediatrician if you see any of these signs.
- To keep your child from being dehydrated, follow your doctor's guidance about what your child should eat and drink. Your doctor may suggest that you give your child special drinks such as Pedialyte that replace body fluids quickly. Follow your doctor's guidance and avoid giving your child store-bought medicines for vomiting and diarrhea unless your doctor recommends them.
- Diarrhea is highly irritating to the skin. Extra care is needed to protect the skin in the diaper area from becoming red and raw. Exposing reddened areas to air is an effective way to promote healing. Use only cotton balls and water to clean those tender areas—many baby wipes contain alcohol, which can sting.
- Remember...giving him/her lots of TLC will help!

**The strongest weapon we have to protect
our children from Rotavirus
is prevention!**

*For more information about Rotavirus Education and other programs offered through
St. Joseph's Children's Advocacy Center please call
(813) 615-0589*

1401A East Fowler Avenue, Tampa, Florida 33612

Sources: Center For Disease Control



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