

What is Rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a common virus that causes mild to severe diarrhea in people. The virus most often causes diarrhea in infants and young children in childcare centres and children's hospitals. Rotavirus can cause diarrhea in adults who provide care for children or people living in homes for older adults. The virus is also a cause of traveller's diarrhea in healthy adults.

What are the symptoms of Rotavirus infection?

Symptoms usually include vomiting, watery diarrhea, cramps, fever, loss of appetite and dehydration. Symptoms usually begin within two days after being infected with the virus, but can also be in as little as one day or as long as three days. Children up to 24 months of age, older adults, and people with other illnesses are most likely to become dehydrated. Signs of dehydration include thirst, restlessness, irritability, fatigue or laziness, urinating less frequently (i.e., dry diaper for several hours), dry mouth, and dry skin. Symptoms commonly last for four to six days. Most people have developed immunity to this virus by three years of age.

How is Rotavirus spread?

Rotavirus is found in the stool of an infected person. An infected person can pass the virus to other people, surfaces, food and water if they have not washed their hands very well after using the toilet. People can become infected after ingesting contaminated water or food. Rotavirus can also be found in an infected person's throat and lungs, and it may spread to another person through a cough or a sneeze. The virus can be spread to other people approximately eight to 30 days after symptoms appear.

How can Rotavirus infection be prevented?

- In Ontario, the rotavirus vaccine is a publicly funded two-dose series recommended for infants at two and four months of age. The vaccine series should be completed by 24 weeks of age. For vaccine details, see our Rotavirus Vaccine factsheet.
- Handwashing is another important means of prevention for diarrheal illnesses. Hands should be washed well with soap and water after using the toilet, after changing diapers, after coughing and sneezing, before preparing or handling food and before eating.
- Wash hands when entering and upon leaving a healthcare facility or child care centre.
- People ill with Rotavirus-like symptoms should be excluded from preparing food and caring for others until they are free of symptoms for at least 24 hours. During an outbreak in a healthcare facility or childcare centre, ill people should be excluded from the facility until they are free of symptoms for at least 48 hours.

How to Clean and Disinfect:

Household bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite) is an inexpensive and effective disinfectant.

- **Kitchens:** Wash and rinse dishes, counters and tables with soap and water to remove food particles, then disinfect as outlined in the chart below.
- **Bathrooms:** Household bleach can be used to disinfect bathrooms and diaper change areas by using a stronger solution according to the recipe below. Many common (non-chlorine) disinfectants do not kill Rotavirus. The virus may live for days or weeks in the environment.

Surface	Bleach recipe	Contact time
Food contact surfaces	Mix 1 teaspoon (4 ml) of unscented bleach into 4 cups (1 L) of water	Air dry
Bathrooms, Feces or vomit contaminated surfaces	Mix 4 teaspoons (20 ml) of unscented bleach into 4 cups (1 L) of water	Leave wet for at least 30 minutes then air dry
	Mix 20 teaspoons (100 ml) of unscented bleach into 4 cups (1 L) of water	Leave wet for at least 10 minutes then air dry

Focus cleaning and disinfection on frequently touched surfaces throughout the home for example light switches, door knobs, telephone, refrigerator handle, television remote and computer keyboard/mouse.

How can Rotavirus infection be treated?

There is no antiviral drug to treat rotavirus infection. As with any disease causing diarrhea or vomiting, people infected should drink plenty of fluids to replace lost body fluids and prevent dehydration.

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