
What is Rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a viral infection that can cause gastroenteritis. This is an infection that usually causes diarrhoea and vomiting and normally affects children between the ages of six months and two years. Rotavirus is the most common virus causing gastroenteritis in children in the UK, with most children having had a rotavirus infection before the age of five years old.

How do you catch Rotavirus?

Rotavirus is present in the gut (intestines) of infected people and can be excreted in their diarrhoea. You can catch it through close contact with them and by touching contaminated surfaces or objects. This is often because the virus is present on the hands of infected people after they have used the toilet.

For children who wear nappies, it may be spread by the hands of the person changing the infected child's nappy. The virus can also be spread if the infected person prepares food.

What are the symptoms of Rotavirus & how long will they last?

The first symptoms are usually a fever and vomiting. Watery diarrhoea then follows. The severity of the diarrhoea can range from mild to severe, and may clear up in about three days but in some cases can last for up to nine days. Some children may also experience some uncomfortable stomach cramps.

There is a risk of dehydration due to your child having frequent bouts of diarrhoea and vomiting. Dehydration is when there is a lack of fluid in the body. Mild dehydration is common and is usually reversed easily and quickly by drinking lots of fluids.

Severe dehydration will need to be treated as a matter of urgency as the organs of the body need a certain amount of fluid to function normally.

How is Rotavirus diagnosed?

Rotavirus is normally diagnosed by sending a sample of a child's stool (faeces) to the laboratory for testing.

What is the treatment for Rotavirus?

There is no specific medication to treat rotavirus. The aim is to ensure that your child has plenty of fluids and avoids becoming dehydrated. If your child is severely dehydrated he/she may require some intravenous fluids (normally given through a needle inserted into a vein). If your child is mildly dehydrated, this may be treated by giving rehydration drinks.

Correcting any dehydration is the first priority. If your child is not dehydrated, or once any dehydration has been corrected your child should be encouraged to have a normal diet. Breast feeding babies should continue to be breast fed if they will take it. Bottle fed babies should be fed with their normal full strength feeds. In both instances, this will usually be in addition to extra rehydration drinks.

Are there any long term ill effects?

Complications from rotavirus are not very common. If symptoms persist or if bowel habits have not returned to normal in the long term please contact your GP.

How can Rotavirus be prevented from being spread to others?

Good hand hygiene is essential. If your child has rotavirus infection you will need to wash your hands before and after changing nappies and preparing, serving, or eating food. Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and warm running water. Your child should be encouraged to wash their hands after using the toilet.

When in hospital, your child will be isolated in a cubicle until symptom free. Your child will have to stay in the cubicle until his/her symptoms have resolved. All healthcare professionals will wear gloves and aprons when having contact with your child, until he/she is symptom free.

Where can I obtain further information?

If you require any further information, please ask the nursing staff to contact one of the Infection Prevention nurses. Alternatively, please phone one of the contact numbers below.

Infection Prevention Team

Royal Gwent Hospital:- 01633 - 238101

Nevill Hall Hospital:- 01873 732048 or 732613

**Community inc., Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr
& Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan 07903 32460**

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