



ROTAVIRUS

What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a virus that causes severe diarrhea and vomiting. It affects mostly babies and young children. Diarrhea and vomiting can lead to serious dehydration (loss of body fluid). If dehydration is not treated, it can be deadly. The rotavirus vaccine protects against this illness.

What are the symptoms of rotavirus?

Rotavirus may cause the following:

- Fever
- Watery diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain

Diarrhea and vomiting may last for three days to eight days. Children may stop eating and drinking while they are sick.

How serious is rotavirus?

Rotavirus can be very harmful. Diarrhea, vomiting and fever can all cause a loss of body fluids. This leads to dehydration, which can be very dangerous, especially for babies and young children. Some children need an IV (needle in their vein) in the hospital to replace lost fluids.

How does rotavirus spread?

Rotavirus spreads easily. The virus is in the stool (feces) of people who are infected with the virus. It is spread by hands, diapers, or objects like toys, changing tables, or doorknobs that have a small amount of the stool on them. The disease commonly spreads in families, hospitals, and child care centers.

Rotavirus is a tough virus. It can live on objects for several days unless it is killed by a disinfectant (cleaner that kills germs). It is very hard to prevent rotavirus with just hand-washing and cleaning with a disinfectant.

Vaccination is the best way to keep children safe from rotavirus.

Can rotavirus be prevented?

The best prevention against rotavirus is the rotavirus vaccine (RotaTeq® and Rotarix®).

Rotavirus vaccines protect children by preparing their bodies to fight the virus. Almost all children (85 to 98 children out of 100) who get the rotavirus vaccine will be protected from severe disease caused by the virus. The vaccine will not stop diarrhea or vomiting caused by other germs, though.