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FACTS & details

about Sedgwick County Government

Rotavirus

March 2014

What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a virus that causes severe diarrhea. Anyone can become infected but the disease occurs most often in babies and young children. The disease is seasonal, occurring most frequently between November and May.

How common is rotavirus?

The disease is common in the United States, however, studies have shown rotavirus vaccines introduced in 2006 have decreased the number of children testing positive for rotavirus infection compared to years before the vaccines were available. People can be infected more than once because there are many different types of rotavirus. Usually a person's first infection causes the most severe symptoms.

How do people become infected?

Large amounts of rotavirus are found in feces (stool) of infected people, both before and after symptoms start. The organism is spread to another person's mouth via unclean hands, objects, food or water. Rotavirus spreads easily to other children and sometimes adults.

What are the signs and symptoms of rotavirus?

The main symptom of rotavirus infection is severe diarrhea. Other symptoms include fever, vomiting and abdominal pain. Vomiting and diarrhea may last from three to eight days. During the illness, loss of appetite and dehydration (loss of fluids) can occur, which can be especially harmful for infants and young children.

How long do symptoms last?

After exposure, symptoms appear in about two days. In people with healthy immune systems, symptoms last for a few days.

How is rotavirus treated?

There is no antiviral drug to treat rotavirus infection. People with rotavirus infection should avoid dehydration by drinking plenty of fluids. In severe cases, infected people may need hospitalization.

How can you prevent rotavirus?

Good hand washing and cleanliness are important in helping stop the spread of illness. However, the best way to protect children against rotavirus is to get them vaccinated on time. Two different rotavirus vaccines are available for infants at two, four and six months (RotaTeq®) or two and four months (Rotarix®). Both vaccines are given orally (by mouth) and are safe and effective in preventing severe rotavirus disease in infants and young children.

Source:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
www.cdc.gov

For More Information:

Contact the Sedgwick County Health Department at 316-660-7300 or visit the Sedgwick County website at www.sedgwickcounty.org.