

## ROTAVIRUS FACT SHEET

### **What is rotavirus?**

Rotavirus is a contagious virus that can cause gastroenteritis (inflammation of the stomach and intestines). Symptoms include severe watery diarrhea, often with vomiting, fever, and abdominal pain. Infants and young children are most likely to get rotavirus disease.

### **What are the symptoms of rotavirus infection?**

Symptoms include severe watery diarrhea, often with vomiting, fever, and abdominal pain. Vomiting and watery diarrhea can last from 3 to 8 days. Additional symptoms include loss of appetite and dehydration (loss of body fluids), which can be especially harmful for infants and young children.

### **Who gets rotavirus?**

Infants and young children are most likely to get rotavirus infection.

### **How is rotavirus spread?**

The virus spreads by the fecal-oral route; this means that the virus must be shed (present in feces) by an infected person and then enter a susceptible person's mouth to cause infection. Rotavirus can be spread by contaminated hands, objects, food and water.

### **Is there treatment for rotavirus infection?**

There is no antiviral drug to treat rotavirus infection. Antibiotic drugs will not help because antibiotics fight against bacteria not viruses. Make sure the patient drinks a lot of fluids to reduce the risk of dehydration.

### **How can rotavirus infection be prevented?**

- **Rotavirus vaccination is the best way to protect children against rotavirus disease.** The vaccines are very effective at preventing severe rotavirus disease in infants and young children.
- The first dose of vaccine is most effective if it is given before a child is 15 weeks of age. Also, children should receive all doses of rotavirus vaccine before they turn 8 months old.
- Rotavirus can spread easily. Good hygiene (handwashing) and cleanliness are important but are not enough to control the spread of the disease.

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/cd/> or [http://www.cdc.gov/rotavirus/index.html?s\\_cid=cs\\_281](http://www.cdc.gov/rotavirus/index.html?s_cid=cs_281)

CDC recommended vaccination schedule:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html>