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# Factsheet on rotavirus

## What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is the most common cause of childhood diarrhoea. It can cause the following:

- Severe vomiting and diarrhoea
- Stomach cramps
- Occasionally fever accompanied by convulsions (known as febrile convulsions)

In rare circumstances a child may need to be admitted to hospital.

The virus lives in the bowel and spreads via the diarrhoea it causes, either directly from hand to mouth or indirectly from droplets in the air, which can be breathed in or ingested.

The time from exposure to developing symptoms is 1-3 days.

The virus can still be found in the motions / stools for a few days after the diarrhoea has finished.

## Who does it affect?

Rotavirus occurs mainly between the ages of 6 months and 2 years, most children having gained immunity to the virus by 3 years of age. It often causes problems in the winter months.

## What is the treatment?

There is no specific treatment for rotavirus infection at present, except to drink plenty of fluids to maintain hydration.

## **How do you prevent it?**

By vaccination. Young babies are offered a vaccine against rotavirus as part of the routine schedule.

Handwashing is the most important method of preventing spread of rotavirus (and many other infections).

Teach your child to always wash their hands after using the toilet or potty and assist them in doing this.

### **Hands should always be washed well with liquid soap and warm water AFTER:**

- Going to the toilet
- Assisting your child with toileting
- Changing nappies
- Handling soiled linen and clothing
- Cleaning up diarrhoea or vomit
- Assisting your child to wash his/her hands after toileting
  
- **BEFORE:**
- Preparing or serving food and drink
- Eating
- Smoking

### **Preventing the spread of rotavirus at home**

Diarrhoea or vomit soiled linen, towels and clothing should be laundered on as hot a wash as possible. Do not overfill your washing machine or it will not clean them properly.

Keep soiled washing separate from the rest of the washing.

Keep outer surfaces of the washing machine clean.

Clean toilet seats, flush handles, door handles and taps more frequently than normal with hot soapy water. You do not need to use disinfectant or bleach, but if you want to then follow the manufacturers' instructions and store them carefully. Keep them away from children and use ones which conform to the British Standard.

Clean toilet bowls and potties after use.

Whilst your child has diarrhoea it is important that they do not play or associate with other children, generally for up to 48 hours after the symptoms have completely subsided.

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This factsheet has been reviewed by a multi-disciplinary team from the North West.

Further advice may be obtained from Cumbria and Lancashire Public Health England Centre. Telephone 0844 225 0602