

Rotavirus (rotavirus infections)

An intestinal infectious disease affects both humans and animals. It is found everywhere in the world. It often occurs in the form of outbreaks and epidemics, especially in kindergartens, nursing homes and wherever large number of people are present.

The cause

The causative agents are rotaviruses, round viruses without an envelope. There are seven groups of viruses.

Incubation period

The time from infection to the onset of the disease is 1–3 days.

Transmission

The virus is transmitted by "faecal-oral" ("hand-to-mouth") transmission. It is very easily transmitted in infected persons, due to insufficient hand hygiene after defecation. The virus is transmitted by contact with food, water, objects and people. Less commonly, it is transmitted by inhaling infected air, aerosols produced when a sick person vomits or defecates.

Susceptibility to infection

Susceptibility to infection is universal. Children can be infected, but adults can also be infected. Children between 6 and 24 months of age are most commonly affected, although infection can occur before and after this period.

Symptoms of the disease

The patient becomes ill with vomiting, abdominal pain and cramps, watery diarrhoea and fever. Infection in young children can be particularly dangerous because it can quickly lead to dehydration or drying out. Adults can get over the infection without signs and symptoms.

Infectiousness

The virus is excreted in high concentrations in the faeces of the affected person. Excretion can start as early as 1 to 2 days before the onset of illness. The patient is infectious at the time he/she passes liquid stool, which in younger children may take more than 14 days.

Treatment

There are no specific drugs for treatment. It is very important to keep up to date with drinking to replace lost fluid and electrolytes. Electrolyte replacement products are also available in pharmacies. If the child is breastfed, breastfeeding should be continued. No special diet is necessary.

Prevention

Live, attenuated vaccine is available for infants.

Disease transmission is prevented by good personal hygiene, including frequent and correct hand washing. The room in which the sick person is accommodated should be wet-cleaned, disinfected if necessary and ventilated several times a day.

Children who have diarrhoea or vomiting should not attend kindergarten or school.

Find out more about rotavirus infections and vaccination (frequently asked questions and answers) [at the following link](#).