
What is rotavirus?

Rotavirus is a virus that causes vomiting (throwing up) and diarrhea (loose stools). Babies and children can get sick quickly because they can lose a lot of fluids from the body. A child with vomiting, diarrhea and fever may get dehydrated more quickly.

- The virus is found in the stool (bowel movement), which may be watery, green and very bad smelling.
- The virus may be in your child's stool 1 to 3 days before they get sick. They may be sick for up to 3 to 7 days.
- Rotavirus can affect people of all ages. Most often, it is worse in children who are 3 to 36 months old.

How can I help prevent the spread of rotavirus?

Rotavirus is spread in the stool. The virus can also live on toys and hard surfaces. Rotavirus is very contagious (passes easily from one person to another). To help prevent rotavirus from spreading:

- Wash your hands well with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (especially after diaper changes).
- Throw away dirty diapers right away.
- Clean toys with soap and water.
- Clean hard surfaces with disinfectant.

How can I help to prevent rotavirus from happening again?

If your child is a baby, they may get a vaccine to help prevent rotavirus. Talk with your child's doctor about the vaccine.

- The vaccine is given by mouth (to be swallowed).
- It can help prevent the disease about 98 percent of the time.
- Babies who get the vaccine are less likely to need to go to the hospital.

What is the treatment for rotavirus?

The goal of treatment is to keep your child from getting dehydrated. Some guidelines to follow include:

- If your child needs to stay in the hospital, they may need intravenous (I.V.) fluids. I.V. fluids can help to replace some of the lost water and electrolytes. They also let your child's stomach rest for a while.
- Your child will not get antibiotics since rotavirus is caused by a virus, not bacteria.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Rotavirus, continued

What is the treatment for vomiting?

The goal of treatment is to keep your child from getting dehydrated. Some guidelines to follow include:

- Some children need to rest their stomach for a short time (15 to 30 minutes) after they vomit. If this is true for your child:
 - Rest the stomach for 15 to 30 minutes after your child vomits the **first time only**. Then, try to give them small amounts (1 teaspoon every 5 minutes) of **clear fluids** for 20 to 30 minutes.
 - If your child is able to keep this down, increase the amount to 2 to 3 teaspoons every 10 to 15 minutes.
 - If your child keeps the fluids down, slowly increase the amount.
 - Double the amount each hour until your child is taking as much as they want.
- If your child continues to vomit while giving them clear fluids, give them smaller amounts of fluid more often. Then, work back up to larger amounts again.
- After your child is able to keep down clear fluids for 6 to 8 hours, slowly give them foods they most often eat. Avoid fatty, fried or spicy foods, such as ice cream, french fries and pizza.
- After 12 to 24 hours without vomiting, slowly move to their normal diet.
- Do not give your child Pepto Bismol , Imodium, Kaopectate or other similar types of medicines.

What are clear fluids?

Clear fluids that help to replace salt and sugar in the right amounts include:

- Give babies **younger than 6 months of age** Pedialyte, Liquilyte or Enfalyte or a less costly store brand.
- For babies and children **older than 6 months of age**:
 - Pour a 12-ounce (oz) bottle of **Gatorade G2 Low Calorie** drink into a clean pitcher. **Do not use other types of Gatorade or other sports drinks.**
 - Refill the G2 bottle with 12 ounces of tap water. Add this to the pitcher.
 - Add **EXACTLY** one-quarter (1/4) measuring teaspoon of salt to the pitcher. Use a measuring spoon, not a kitchen teaspoon or soup spoon. If possible, have another adult check the amount with you. You do not want to use too little or too much salt.
 - Stir well with a mixing spoon.

For all babies younger than 12 months of age:

- Do not use **just** water for a baby younger than 12 months of age unless advised by their doctor.
- For babies who drink formula – give their normal formula after they can drink clear fluids well for 6 to 8 hours. Start slow and give small amounts of formula.

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Rotavirus, continued

For all babies and children:

- Do not feed **just** clear liquids for longer than 4 to 6 hours.
- Do not give diet drinks or sugary drinks like fruit juices, Jello-O, popsicles, frozen slushy drinks or sodas. Do not give drinks with caffeine like sodas or teas.
- Avoid red-colored drinks that may look like blood in the stool.

What do I do if my baby is breastfed?

- If your baby has vomited only 1 or 2 times:
 - Keep breastfeeding.
 - Offer shorter feedings more often than normal.
 - Breastfeed them like normal after they can go 4 hours without vomiting.
- Offer short feedings often. If you would like, you may pump your breasts so you can measure how much you give your baby.

What is the treatment for diarrhea?

The goal of treatment is to keep your child from getting dehydrated. Some guidelines to follow are listed below.

Give extra fluids

Give your child extra fluids, but keep giving your child their regular food, too. Offer fluids with each loose or liquid stool. Diarrhea can make children very thirsty.

Extra fluids that help to replace salt and sugar in the right amounts include:

- Give babies **younger than 6 months of age** Pedialyte, Liquilyte or Enfalyte or a less costly store brand.
- For babies and children **older than 6 months of age**:
 - Pour a 12-ounce (oz) bottle of **Gatorade G2 Low Calorie** drink into a clean pitcher. **Do not use other types of Gatorade or other sports drinks.**
 - Refill the G2 bottle with 12 ounces of tap water. Add this to the pitcher.
 - Add **EXACTLY** one-quarter (1/4) measuring teaspoon of salt to the pitcher. Use a measuring spoon, not a kitchen teaspoon or soup spoon. If possible, have another adult check the amount with you. You do not want to use too little or too much salt.
 - Stir well with a mixing spoon.

For all babies younger than 12 months of age:

- Do not use **just** water for a baby younger than 12 months of age unless advised by their doctor.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Rotavirus, continued

For all babies and children:

- Do not give diet drinks or sugary drinks like fruit juices, Jell-O, popsicles, frozen slushy drinks or sodas. Do not give drinks with caffeine like sodas or teas.
- Avoid red-colored drinks that may look like blood in the stool.

Diet for breastfed babies:

- Breastfeed your baby like normal. Call your child's doctor if this makes the diarrhea worse.

Diet for babies on solids or for children:

- Do not feed **just** clear liquids for longer than 4 to 6 hours.
- First, give extra clear liquids and foods your child most often eats.
 - Avoid fatty, fried or spicy foods, such as ice cream, french fries and pizza.
 - Avoid high sugar foods and drinks, such as candy and Kool-Aid.
- Add other foods as the diarrhea gets better. Call your child's doctor if increasing milk or formula seems to make the diarrhea worse.

Note: If your child is also vomiting, do not feed them solid foods. Give them small amounts of liquids often as listed above.

How can I help keep my child's skin clear?

You can help keep your child's skin clear by cleaning it well.

- Avoid diaper wipes.
- Clean your child's diaper area or bottom gently and well with soap and water. Pat the skin dry with a clean towel.
- Put on a zinc-based ointment, such as Desitin, thickly after cleaning. This helps keep stool away from the skin.
- Wash your hands and diaper changing surfaces well after each diaper change.

When can my child return to day care or school?

Your child can return to day care or school when all of these happen:

- Fever is gone for 24 hours after medicines used to treat fever are stopped
- Stool is formed enough to stay in the diaper
- Vomiting has stopped

Make sure all of your child's caregivers know your child has had rotavirus. Remind all caregivers to wash their hands often, especially after diaper changes.

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Rotavirus, continued

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor **right away** if your child has one or more of these:

- They do not smile or play for even a few minutes every 4 hours.
- If your child has problems keeping any fluids down or vomits more than 8 times in less than 8 hours:
 - For babies younger than 6 months old – call if their vomiting is not better after 12 hours.
 - For babies older than 6 months old and children – call if their vomiting is not better after 24 hours.
- Their vomit is green.
- Their vomit has blood in it or looks like coffee grounds.
- You see blood or mucus in their stool.
- Stomach pain continues between vomiting or loose or liquid stools.
- They stomach hurts on the right side of the belly.
- You see signs of dehydration:
 - No urine in 6 hours in a baby younger than 12 months old
 - No urine in more than 8 hours in a child older than 12 months old
 - No tears when crying
 - Sunken eyes
 - Dry lips and mouth
- Regular pain or crying comes back with or without vomiting.
- They seem to be breathing hard or fast, even after treating a fever.
- They get weak, sluggish or look or act sick.
- They are not eating their normal diet without fatty or spicy foods in 48 hours.
- Their fever is higher than 102°F.

Also call your child's doctor if you have questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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