

FACT SHEET

Rotavirus

Common clinical features

Diarrhoea and vomiting with a duration of up to 5 days. Can be severe watery diarrhoea leading to dehydration in young children. Major cause of hospital admission for diarrhoea in young children. Infection in adults can be mild but outbreaks can occur in elderly hospital patients and nursing home residents.

Incubation period

Usually 2 days.

Where is it found?

Gastrointestinal tract of man. Rarely, infections are caused by animal strains.

How is it acquired by affected individuals?

Transmitted directly from person to person by faecal oral route and sometimes from environmental contamination. More common in cooler months of year.

How does the laboratory confirm the diagnosis?

Rotavirus antigens are detected in faeces using an immunoassay test. The result is usually available within 1 day of receipt of the sample.

How is it treated?

Symptomatic treatment and rehydration.