



PUBLIC FACT SHEET

VIRAL DIARRHEA

What is diarrhea?

Diarrhea is caused by an inflammation of the stomach and intestines. It is characterized by frequent, loose bowel movements. Diarrhea can be caused by many viruses including:

- Rotavirus
- Noro virus
- Hepatitis A

How is diarrhea spread?

Diarrhea may be spread through the following ways:

- Direct contact with an infected person.
- Eating food or drinking water contaminated by a virus that can cause diarrhea.
- Not washing one's hands after going to the bathroom.

What are possible symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Abdominal pain and cramping
- Nausea and vomiting
- Fever and chills
- Dehydration

How is diarrhea diagnosed?

A health care provider can diagnose diarrhea based on the symptoms. Poop samples can be analyzed for bacteria and viruses if diarrhea continues.

What is the treatment for diarrhea?

The goal of treatment for diarrhea is to avoid dehydration. Encourage extra fluids to replace what is lost with diarrhea. Electrolyte solutions are available at the store. Juice, soda and water **do not** replace the electrolytes lost with vomiting or diarrhea. **DO NOT** give anti-diarrhea medicine to children unless your doctor gives you instructions to do so.

For newborns (babies less than 3 months old): Call your doctor if your newborn has diarrhea.

For infants and children less than 3 years old: Children are more prone to dehydration than adults. Notify your doctor if diarrhea lasts for more than 2 days.

For older children and adults: Most diarrheas will resolve without treatment.

Signs and symptoms of dehydration to watch for:

- Irritability
- Sunken appearing eyes
- Sluggish or lethargic
- In infants-sunken fontanel (soft spot on the top of the head)
- No urine output in 6 hours
- Skin feels dry and not springy

Notify your physician if there are signs of dehydration.

There is a newly licensed vaccine called **RotaTeq** that protects against diarrhea caused by rotavirus that is available for young infants. For more information please go to the website: www.merck.com/product/usa/pi_circulars/r/rotateq/rotateq_ppi.pdf

For more information on diarrhea:

Ottawa County Health Department

www.miOttawa.org

Medline Plus/National Institutes of Health

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001965.htm

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000252.htm

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003126.htm