

News Release

For Immediate Release

June 27th, 2024

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What is Rotavirus?

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages parents of infants and young children to make sure they are up to date on their recommended immunizations, including rotavirus. Rotavirus is the most common cause of severe diarrhea in babies and children and can make them very dehydrated, which is especially dangerous during hot weather.

The way to prevent stomach illnesses like rotavirus is to wash your hands thoroughly after changing diapers, wash your child's hands with a washcloth prior to eating and after the use of the bathroom, keep your child home if they are having diarrhea, and get vaccinated against rotavirus.

Prior to the rotavirus vaccine, this disease caused about 400,000 doctor visits with about 200,000 emergency room (ER) visits each year in the United States. Deaths from rotavirus are rare in the US, but around 450,000 children across the world will die each year from this preventable disease.

Those most at risk from rotavirus are infants and children under 3 years old, but it can also affect older children and adults. It is spread when they put unwashed hands that have germs from stool (poop) in their mouth, eat contaminated food, or touch an object or surface that has the germs and then put their hands in their mouth.

Rotavirus can cause severe watery diarrhea and vomiting, as well as fever, stomach pain, and dehydration. Symptoms of dehydration in babies include dry mouth, crying with few tears, and fewer wet diapers. Most people become sick about 2-3 days after being around someone who has the virus. There is no specific medicine to treat rotavirus infection, but healthcare providers may recommend medicine to treat the symptoms.

The best way to protect your infants and young children from getting severe complications from rotavirus is to have them vaccinated. Infants typically receive a rotavirus vaccine during their Well Child checks at 2,4 and 6 months of age. There are two different vaccines offered, with two or three doses depending on which vaccine is offered by your healthcare provider.

If you have questions about these vaccines, call your healthcare provider or Melissa Propp, Clinic Manager for SWNPHD, at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. Follow us on Facebook, Tiktok, YouTube and Instagram or view the website at www.swhealth.ne.gov.

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