

Introduction

Rotavirus is a viral infection that causes gastroenteritis in thousands of young children and babies yearly.

Transmission is through oral-faecal route, directly from person to person, or indirectly through contaminated objects. These could be a hand to mouth contact and can be picked up from surfaces such as toys, hands or dirty nappies. It can also be spread through the air by sneezing and coughing.

Rotavirus is most recognisable by severe watery diarrhoea, vomiting, fever, and/or abdominal pain. Other symptoms of rotavirus include loss of appetite and dehydration (loss of body fluids), which can be especially dangerous for infants and young children leading to hospitalisation. These symptoms may develop few days after someone is exposed to rotavirus and can last three to eight days.

Case study

Mary is 3 years old. One morning Mary's parents took her to the paediatric Accident and Emergency department at their local hospital following a 24-hour history of vomiting, non-bloody diarrhoea, stomach cramps, a temperature of 40°C, and decreased oral intake. Mary was given fluids at home by her parents to try to avoid her becoming dehydrated, but at the hospital tests showed that she had rotavirus.

Questions for discussion

- What are the main approaches and strategies that could be used to measure an outbreak of rotavirus?
- What are the main approaches and strategies that could be used to monitor an outbreak of rotavirus?
- What are the main approaches and strategies that could be used to control an outbreak of rotavirus?
- Identify some factors that may influence the health and well-being of individuals affected by rotavirus. What health education information will you give to the community about this disease?

As this is a discussion, you will be awarded a mark based on the knowledge, understanding, and skills that you demonstrate during your talk and discussion. You may be asked questions to clarify any points you make as part of this. Your work must be underpinned by researched facts and data that show your research skills and understanding of the key points that you have included.