



Centre for Disease Control

NT HEALTH

Public Health Alert

Issued: 5 April 2024

Issued by: Director, Centre for Disease Control

Issued to: Clinicians

Increase in rotavirus notifications

Summary

- The Centre for Disease Control has detected an increase in the number of rotavirus notifications in the Northern Territory with 40 cases reported so far this year and 21 cases reported since 1 March 2024.
- Most cases have occurred in Darwin and Alice Springs regions, but cases may increase in other regions over time. Over half (58%) of cases were aged 10 years or younger, and 41% of those cases were not up to date with rotavirus vaccinations for their age.

Actions

Clinicians are asked to;

- **Ensure vaccination is on time:** The rotavirus vaccine used in the Northern Territory (Rotarix®) should be given at 6 weeks and at 4 months of age. The 1st dose must be given before 15 weeks of age with the 2nd dose given at least 4 weeks later and before 25 weeks of age.
- **Collect stool samples** for rotavirus testing as well as for microscopy and culture in the first few cases of gastroenteritis to confirm that rotavirus is in your community.
- **Handwashing** should be reinforced, in particular before preparing meals and after changing nappies. Hygiene posters can be found at: <https://nt.gov.au/wellbeing/healthy-living/no-germs-on-me-campaign>
- **Exclude** children and adults who have diarrhoea from school, childcare and workplaces until diarrhoea-free for 24 hours. People with diarrhoea should not prepare or handle food for others and must stay away
- **Clean contaminated surfaces** immediately and thoroughly with hot, soapy water and then disinfect the area using a household disinfectant. If possible, disinfect with a freshly made sodium hypochlorite (bleach) solution, prepared according to manufacturer's instructions.

About

- Rotavirus is highly infectious with an incubation period of 24-72 hours.
- It causes a moderate to severe gastroenteritis among infants and young children and it is usually self-limiting, with recovery in 4-6 days. Children under 5 years are most at risk, but children less than 6 months of age are more likely to develop severe, rapid dehydration. Adults are less commonly affected, but can pass on the virus to others without demonstrating symptoms.

Centre for Disease Control
Public Health Division

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Prevention

- Rotavirus is a vaccine preventable disease.
- The rotavirus vaccine used in the Northern Territory (Rotarix®) and should be given at 6 weeks and at 4 months of age. The 1st dose must be given before 15 weeks of age with the 2nd dose given at least 4 weeks later and before 25 weeks of age.
- Vaccination will not prevent all cases of rotavirus and even if a child is fully vaccinated they may still develop rotavirus, although the disease is likely to be milder and the child will be less likely to require hospitalisation. If children develop disease, they should still continue with vaccination if eligible, as only partial immunity is achieved from disease.

Further information

[Rotavirus | NT.GOV.AU](#)

Contact

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CDC Tennant Creek	Ph 8962 4259	Fax 8962 4420	cdc.barkly@nt.gov.au
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