Rotavirus gastroenteritis is caused by rotavirus that infects the stomach and bowel. Rotavirus gastroenteritis is common in infants and young children. Children under five years of age, especially those between 6 months and two years are most vulnerable to the disease.

Rotavirus is highly contagious among children. Repeat infections with different viral strains are possible, and most children have several episodes of rotavirus infection in the first years of life. The first infection tends to be the most severe as the body builds up immunity (resistance) to the virus afterwards. This is why rotavirus infections are extremely rare in adults.

The incubation period for a rotavirus lasts approximately two days. Infants and children with rotavirus infection have diarrhoea, vomiting, fever and often followed by abdominal pain and dehydration. Children - particularly those under the age of two- are at higher risk of dehydration and may require hospital treatment.

Infected people pass the virus before and after they have symptoms of the illness. Infection results from ingestion of infected foods or drinks. Touching a surface contaminated with rotavirus and then touching the mouth area can result in infection.

The virus is highly resistant in the environment and can survive for months in stools at room temperature. The virus is widespread in developing and developed countries.

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