

Rotavirus

Rotavirus is not a reportable disease in Louisiana.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rotavirus is the leading cause of severe diarrhea in infants and young children worldwide. Before rotavirus vaccine was introduced for U.S. infants in 2006, rotavirus was also the leading cause of severe diarrhea in U.S. Globally, it causes more than a half a million deaths each year in children younger than five years of age. Rotaviruses are non-enveloped, RNA viruses belonging to the family Reoviridae. The clinical manifestations of the illness range from mild, watery diarrhea of limited duration to severe, dehydrating diarrhea with vomiting and fever, which can result in death. Severe illness occurs primarily among children aged three months to thirty-five months. Diarrheal illnesses are not typically tested diagnostically due to their widespread and self-limiting nature. Treatment is generally supportive.

Rotaviruses are transmitted fecal-orally; infected children shed rotavirus in high concentrations in their stools. Therefore, day care centers are often common sites for widespread infections. Rotaviruses are also an important cause of nosocomial gastroenteritis and they may also be spread by respiratory droplets. Although the role of rotavirus in diarrhea outbreaks in adults has not been well studied, there have been documented outbreaks occurring in hospitals, nursing homes, isolated communities and in travelers. Parents of children infected with rotavirus have been reported to experience acute gastroenteritis as well. In the United States, rotavirus transmission exhibits seasonal patterns; infection rates are particularly high between November and May each year.

Limited data has shown that children from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds and premature infants are at an increased risk for hospitalization from diarrheal disease, including rotavirus diarrhea. Immunocompromised persons may experience more severe, prolonged and sometimes fatal rotavirus diarrhea as well.