

## SEASONAL DISEASES

## Rotavirus season 2021

Rotavirus is a common childhood infection with a seasonal pattern, peaking during the cooler, drier months of the year. Since the rotavirus vaccine was introduced into the South African national immunization programme in 2009, the annual rotavirus season occurs from late June to mid-August.

Diarrhoeal surveillance restarted in May 2021 and is conducted in three provinces [Free State (Pelonomi Hospital); North West (Klerksdorp/Tshepong hospitals); and Western Cape (Red Cross Children's Hospital, Eastridge Clinic and Michell's Plain Hospital and Clinic)], targeting all patients who present for the treatment of diarrhoea. In addition, diarrhoeal surveillance is conducted as part of the ANDEMIA program in two provinces [Gauteng

(Kalafong Hospital), and Mpumalanga (Mapulaneng and Matikwana hospitals)] and has been running since 2018.

A total of 361 stool specimens have been screened with 24% (86/361) positive for rotavirus, mostly concentrated in the Western Cape and the 2021 season dominated by G2P[4] strains. As expected the 2021 rotavirus season was earlier (week 16; 19 April) and the prevalence higher than seen in 2019 (11%; 57/508). Most of the rotavirus cases were in children < 5 years. Vaccination remains the most important intervention to combat rotavirus diarrhoea and all children should receive two doses of the oral formulation at 6 and 14 weeks.

