Norovirus or Noro-like Illness

You are being provided with this fact sheet:

☐ because you or your child may have been exposed to a norovirus. If you believe your child may be ill with a norovirus, contact your medical provider. Notify your child care provider or preschool immediately if your health care provider has suspects or diagnoses a norovirus or a suspected noro-like illness.

☐ for informational purposes only.

What is Norovirus?
Norovirus is the name given to a group of many related viruses that are a common cause of similar symptoms affecting the gastrointestinal system. A norovirus illness may also be referred to by other names such as stomach flu, food poisoning and viral gastroenteritis (an inflammation of the stomach and intestines). Because there are so many of these viruses and there is no persisting immunity after an infection, people can develop repeated similar illnesses throughout a lifetime, particularly during childhood.

What are the symptoms of Norovirus?
People with norovirus can feel extremely ill and experience the following symptoms:

- Explosive vomiting (that shoots out)
- Watery, non-bloody, diarrhea
- Stomach cramps
- Fever*, chills, headache, muscle aches

(* Fever is defined as: temperature above 100°F (37.8°C) under the arm or 101°F (38.3°C) orally.)

The symptoms often begin suddenly within 12 to 48 hours after being exposed to the virus. Most people get better within 1 to 3 days but in young children the illness could last up to 4 to 6 days. There are no long-term health effects from the illness, though dehydration (loss of fluids) from diarrhea and vomiting may occur and may result in hospitalization.

How is Norovirus spread?
Norovirus is found in the feces (stool) and vomit of infected people even before they start to feel sick. The virus can become aerosolized when people vomit. It is very contagious and usually spreads very quickly infecting many people within a short amount of time.

Exposure to the virus happens by getting the virus into the mouth such as when someone:

- Eats food or drinks liquids that are contaminated with the norovirus.
- Touches surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus and then puts their hands into their mouth.
- Has direct contact with a person who is infected and showing symptoms. For example, when caring for or sharing food, drinks, or eating utensils with someone who is ill.

How contagious is Norovirus?
Norovirus is very contagious. People infected with norovirus are the most contagious when they begin feeling ill until at least 48 hours after their symptoms end. However, some people may be contagious and not even show any symptoms. Some people can be contagious as long as 2 weeks after they feel better because they can shed the virus in their stool.

Norovirus tends to spread quickly in places where there are close living spaces, such as child cares, long-term care facilities, schools, and cruise ships. People who work in these types of facilities should
carefully follow steps to prevent the spread of infection when caring for children or residents who may have a norovirus infection.

**How is Norovirus diagnosed?**
Diagnosis is usually made based on the person’s symptoms. Laboratory diagnosis for norovirus is usually only done to help determine the cause of an outbreak. Public Health may request samples of stool or vomit to look for norovirus in the laboratory.

**How is Norovirus treated?**
Treatment consists of drinking plenty of fluids and getting adequate rest. Neither antibiotics nor antivirals are effective in treating norovirus. Some people especially the very young, the elderly and persons with weakened immune systems can become dehydrated and may need medical attention.

**How is the spread of Norovirus prevented?**
You can decrease your chance of becoming ill with norovirus or of spreading it to others by following these recommendations:

- Make sure that both children and adults follow good handwashing practices at all times. Wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap, especially after using the toilet, changing diapers, and helping children use the toilet.
- Wash hands properly before preparing, serving, or eating food.
- If disposable gloves are worn, wash hands thoroughly after removing gloves.
- Flush or discard any vomit and stool down the toilet.
- Use a sanitizing solution to help minimize germs on surfaces such as tabletops, counters, and toys. For bathrooms, diaper changing areas, and other contaminated surfaces, use a disinfectant. Child care staff should consult with the Child Care Health Outreach program (425.339.5278) for additional recommendations on cleaning and sanitizing.
- Clean and disinfect hard, non-porous surfaces (e.g. countertops, toilets, floors) contaminated with vomit or stool. Wearing disposable gloves, wipe up as much of the matter as possible, clean with soap and water, then disinfect according to product instructions. Wash hands after removing gloves. Carpets can be disinfected by steam cleaning. For a complete list of EPA approved disinfectants against norovirus go to: [http://epa.gov/oppad001/list_g_norovirus.pdf](http://epa.gov/oppad001/list_g_norovirus.pdf).
- Thoroughly wash all dishes and utensils used by known ill persons with hot water (170° F) and soap. If this is not possible, disinfect the dishes and thoroughly rinse and rewash the dishes.
- Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens contaminated after an episode of diarrhea or vomiting. Wear disposable gloves to handle clothing and linen. Use hot water and soap to launder. Dry in hot dryer. Personal items should be double-bagged and sent home. Wash hands after removing gloves.
- Wash all raw fruits and vegetables.

**Exclude from group settings?**
Any person who has 3 or more loose stools within a 24 hour period needs to be excluded from school or child care until at least 24 hours, and preferably 48 hours, after stools return to normal. Exclude also if they have vomited 2 or more times within a 24 hour period.
It is recommended that workers preparing food in child care settings should not prepare food for at least 72 hours after they recover from their illness. **Reference:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/](http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/)