



FACTS ABOUT NOROVIRUS

What is Norovirus?

Norovirus is the name of a group of viruses that is a common cause of vomiting and diarrhea illness outbreaks. Although people who have norovirus infection may feel very sick for several days, the illness is seldom serious.

What are the symptoms of Norovirus?

Symptoms often begin suddenly within 12 to 48 hours after exposure to norovirus. Most people get better within one or two days and have no long-term health effects from the illness, though dehydration (loss of fluids) may occur and may result in hospitalization.

Symptoms include:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Watery diarrhea
- Stomach cramps
- Fever, chills, headache, muscle aches

How is Norovirus spread?

Norovirus is found in the stool and vomit of infected people. It is very contagious and usually spread person-to-person, or by contaminated food. People can become infected with the virus by:

- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus.
- Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus and then putting their hands in their mouth.
- Direct contact with a person who is infected and showing symptoms, such as caring for someone with the illness, or sharing foods or eating utensils with someone who is ill.

Norovirus can spread quickly in places with close living quarters, such as childcare centers, long-term care facilities, 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. People infected with norovirus are contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill until at least 3 days after symptoms end.

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.

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:

- **Wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap**, especially after using the toilet, changing diapers, before eating, and before preparing food.
- **Clean and disinfect** hard, non-porous surfaces (i.e. countertops, toilets, floors) contaminated with vomit or stool quickly. Flush or discard any vomit and stool down the toilet. Wearing disposable gloves, wipe up as much of the matter as possible, clean with soap and water, then disinfect with a solution of at least 1/3 cup household bleach mixed with 1 gallon of water (at least 1 part household bleach solution to 50 parts water). Leave on the surface for 10 minutes, rinse with water, then air dry. Wash hands after removing gloves. Carpets can be disinfected by steam cleaning.
- **Thoroughly wash all dishes and utensils** used by ill persons with hot (170 degrees F) water and soap.
- **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. Wash hands after removing gloves.
- **Avoid food preparation or contact with healthy people** for at least three days after the last symptoms have occurred.
- **Wash raw fruits and vegetables, and cook oysters and other shellfish** before eating them.