

You are being provided with this fact sheet:

because you or your child may have been exposed to norovirus. If you believe your child may be ill with norovirus, contact your health care provider. Notify your child care provider or preschool if your health care provider diagnoses 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 starts abruptly
- watery, non-bloody, diarrhea
- stomach cramps
- fever*, chills, headache, muscle aches

The symptoms often begin suddenly within 12 to 48 hours after being exposed to the virus. Most people get better within 1 to 5 days, but in young children the illness can last longer. 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:

- An infected person does not wash their hands properly after using the bathroom, and then contaminates food that is consumed by other people.
- An infected person contaminates their fingers with infectious particles from feces or vomit, and then touches surfaces or objects that are then touched by other people.

How contagious is Norovirus?

Norovirus is very contagious. People infected with norovirus are contagious even before they start showing symptoms, are most contagious when having symptoms, and continue to shed the virus for as long as 3-4 weeks after symptoms end. 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 individuals who may have a norovirus infection.

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Child Care Health Outreach Program

3020 Rucker Avenue, Suite 104 ■ Everett, WA 98201-3900 ■ www.snohd.org ■ tel: 425.252.5415

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.

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 high-risk groups such as the very young, the elderly, and people 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:

- **Handwashing is the best way to prevent norovirus.** 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.
- Wash all raw fruits and vegetables.
- If disposable gloves are worn, wash hands thoroughly after removing gloves.
- Thoroughly disinfect bathrooms, diaper changing areas, and other contaminated surfaces. Child care staff should consult with the Child Care Health Outreach program at 425.252.5415 (or other health department if out of county) for additional recommendations on cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting.
- 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: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-04/documents/list_g_disinfectant_list_3_15_18.pdf
- Thoroughly wash all dishes and utensils used by known ill persons and sanitize with high heat or chemicals.
- Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that become contaminated after an episode of diarrhea or vomiting. Wear disposable gloves to handle clothing and linens. 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.

Exclude from group settings?

Any person who has 2 or more loose stools above their normal pattern in a 24 hour period needs to be excluded from preschool 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. Workers preparing food in child care settings should not prepare food for at least 48 hours after they recover from their illness.

* Fever is defined as a temperature above 101°F (38.3°C) by any method or above 100.4°F (38.0°C) for infants younger than 2 months old.

References:

American Academy of Pediatrics

- [Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, 4th ed.](#)
- [Red Book: 2018-2021 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases, 31st ed.](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (website)

- [Norovirus. Accessed August 2020.](#)

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