

Norovirus Fact Sheet

Norovirus, formerly called “Norwalk-like virus” is common cause of gastroenteritis, which can lead to vomiting and sometimes diarrhea.

Norovirus infection occurs in people of all ages.

Norovirus infection is common. It is often seen in the winter among children in schools and child care settings, and among residents and employees of nursing homes.

People get norovirus from other people.

Norovirus is present in the stool or vomit of infected persons. The virus is usually spread to other people either by contact with an infected person's stool or vomit or by eating or drinking contaminated food or water. You can get norovirus infection by being near someone who is vomiting while they are infected. The virus is easily spread in settings such as households, health care settings, schools and child care centers, and during food preparation if hands have not been thoroughly washed with soap and water.

Norovirus causes symptoms such as:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Stomach pain
- Low fever
- Headache, muscle aches, chills
- Tiredness

Symptoms usually begin suddenly in 12 to 48 hours after exposure. Symptoms usually last 24 to 48 hours and go away without treatment.

Hand washing is the most important way to prevent infection. Wash hands with soap and water:

- After using the toilet
- After having diarrhea or vomiting
- After changing diapers
- After touching any stool-soiled or vomit-soiled materials, toilets, or surfaces
- Before handling food or drink
- After cleaning up vomit or diarrhea from someone who is ill with norovirus gastroenteritis
- Before eating

Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness by using a bleach-based household cleaner.

Help young children to wash their hands.

See your doctor if you have severe gastroenteritis.

- If vomiting and/or diarrhea are severe, you may need to receive fluids in the hospital.
- Food handlers, health care/child care workers, and children in child care who have norovirus infection should not work or attend child care until at least 48 hours after their symptoms have cleared. In some cases, the health department may require longer exclusions.
- Antibiotics do not treat norovirus infection and will not help your symptoms.