



Infection Prevention & Control

Fact Sheet

NOROVIRUS

"Norwalk"

What is Norovirus?

Norovirus is a small virus that causes mild to moderate vomiting and diarrheal illness, usually in adults. It has often been referred to as "stomach flu". Norovirus infections spread very quickly and have been linked to outbreaks of vomiting and/or diarrhea in institutions such as child-care centres and long term care facilities as well as on cruise ships, at schools and in households. The virus was first identified in 1972 after an outbreak of gastrointestinal illness in Norwalk, Ohio.



How do people get a Norovirus infection?

Norovirus is found in the stool and sometimes in the vomit of ill persons. The virus is spread very easily from person to person by coming into contact with the fecally contaminated hands of an ill person or by contact with fecally-contaminated objects (e.g. door knobs, stair railings,) and then touching your mouth. It is also spread by ingesting contaminated food and water. Airborne transmission has been suggested to explain the rapid spread in institutional settings. Proper hand-washing is the best way to prevent the spread of a Norovirus infection.

What are the signs and symptoms of a Norovirus infection?

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Stomach cramps
- Low-grade fever

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear in 12-48 hours after swallowing contaminated food or water. Severe illness is uncommon. Infected persons usually recover in 2 to 3 days without long-term effects.

What is the treatment for a Norovirus infection?

There is no specific treatment for a Norovirus infection. Persons should get bed rest and drink plenty of fluids. Persons who become severely dehydrated should seek medical attention.

How can a Norovirus infection be prevented?

- Wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer after toilet visits and before preparing or eating food.
- Wash raw vegetables before eating.
- Cook foods thoroughly before eating.
- Food handlers with symptoms of Norovirus-like illness should not prepare or touch food.
- Health care workers with symptoms of Norovirus-like illness should remain at home until 48 hours after symptoms have resolved.
- Thoroughly disinfect contaminated surfaces.
- Wash soiled articles of clothing.

Hand Washing Protocol



Hand Cleansing with Water:

- Wet hands under warm running water.
- Apply soap and rub together for at least 15 seconds, washing well between the fingers and around nails.
- Rinse well with warm running water.
- Dry with hand towel or paper towel.
- Turn the tap off using paper towel or hand towel (remember...your hands were dirty when you turned the tap on).
- Throw the paper towel in the trash. If you are using a hand towel, do not share it with other people and wash it often.

Hand Cleansing with Hand Sanitizer:

- Apply approximately 1 tsp. of sanitizer to your palm.
- Cover each area, rubbing vigorously and interlacing fingers.
- Rub for 10-15 seconds until hands are dry.
- Do not rinse off.