

Norovirus

FACT SHEET



Washtenaw County
Health Department

What are Noroviruses?

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause gastroenteritis (the "stomach flu") in people. Norovirus can survive on surfaces for several days. Norovirus is very contagious and can spread easily from person to person. You can get norovirus many times in your life.

What are the symptoms?

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Stomach cramping
- Low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and tiredness (in some people)

Symptoms usually begin about 12 hours after exposure. The illness begins very suddenly and the infected person feels very sick. Symptoms usually last 1-3 days. People are contagious from the moment they become ill to at least 3 days after recovery. Some people may be contagious for up to 2 weeks after recovery.

How is it spread?

Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected persons.

People become infected by:

- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus
- Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus, and then putting your unwashed fingers in your mouth
- Having direct contact with someone who is infected and showing symptoms

Guidelines for Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection of Norovirus: bit.ly/NoroCleaning

How is it treated?

- There is no antiviral medication that works against norovirus and there is no vaccine to prevent infection
- Norovirus infection **cannot** be treated with an antibiotic
- For children, an oral rehydration fluid such as Pedialyte, Ceralyte, or Oralyte can be used to prevent dehydration
- Adults should drink clear liquids and avoid alcoholic and caffeinated beverages

What are the symptoms of dehydration?

- Decrease in urination
- Dry mouth and throat
- Feeling dizzy when standing up

Children with dehydration may cry without tears and be unusually sleepy or fussy. If you or a family member has symptoms of dehydration, call your health care provider.

How is it prevented?

- **Do not prepare food while you have symptoms and for at least 48 hours after symptoms stop. Any food that may have been contaminated by an infected person should be thrown away.**
- Wash your hands with soap and water, especially after using the restroom, changing diapers and before eating or preparing food.
- Hand sanitizers aren't as effective as washing hands with soap and water.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly
- Cook oysters and other shellfish completely to kill the virus.
- Norovirus can be found in your vomit or poop even before you start feeling sick. The virus can stay in your poop for two weeks after you feel better. It is important to continue washing your hands after using the restroom.
- After someone vomits or has diarrhea, always clean and disinfect the entire area immediately. Disinfect with a bleach based household cleaner as directed on the product label.
- Wash clothes or linens contaminated with vomit or poop with the hot water setting and dry with the highest heat setting.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.