

General Fact Sheet for Norovirus (viral gastroenteritis)

What is norovirus?

Noroviruses are a group of viruses (previously known as Norwalk-like viruses) that can cause inflammation of the stomach and intestines (gastroenteritis). This infection is often mistakenly referred to as the “stomach flu”. Norovirus is not related to the flu (influenza).

What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms of norovirus infection include vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramping. Less common symptoms can include low-grade fever or chills, headache, and muscle aches. Symptoms usually begin 1 or 2 days after ingesting the virus, but may appear as early as 12 hours after exposure. The illness typically comes on suddenly. The infected person may feel very sick and vomit often, sometimes without warning, many times a day. Sometimes people infected with norovirus have no symptoms at all, but can still pass the virus to others.

How long does it last?

Most people recover in 1 or 2 days and have no long-term health effects. Dehydration can be a concern for younger and older adults, or people with weakened immune systems. Occasionally infected people may experience milder symptoms for a week or more.

How is it spread?

Noroviruses are very contagious. They are found in the poop or vomit of infected people. Noroviruses are transferred to food, water, or surfaces by not washing your hands properly after using the bathroom.

People become infected with norovirus by:

- Eating food or drinking liquids contaminated by an infected person.
- Eating uncooked shellfish that has been harvested from contaminated waters.
- Touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching their mouth or eating without washing their hands first.

What should I do if I have symptoms?

- Drink plenty of fluids so you don't become dehydrated.
- Wash your hands often and do not prepare food for others.
- Contact your health care provider (but remember that antibiotics don't treat viruses).

How can I prevent norovirus infections?

- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds.
 - After using the bathroom
 - After changing diapers
 - Before preparing foods
 - Before eating
 - Wash your hands more often when someone in your household is sick.
 - Clean and disinfect surfaces with a household bleach solution immediately after vomiting or diarrheal accidents.
 - Avoid preparing food for others while you have symptoms and for at least 3 days after you recover.

Where can I get more information on norovirus?

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Norovirus webpage at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/index.html>