

Norovirus

What is norovirus?

Norovirus is a type of virus that affects the stomach and intestines and is sometimes referred to as “food poisoning” or the “stomach flu”, but it is not related to influenza.

Anyone can get norovirus, and they may have it several times during their lifetime. Norovirus is very common in the United States.

How does norovirus spread?

The virus is found in the stool and vomit of infected people. It can be spread by:

- Eating food or drinking something that has the virus in it
- Touching surfaces or objects that have the virus on them and putting your hands in your mouth
- Caring for someone who has the virus
- Sharing food or utensils with someone who is ill

What are the symptoms?

People with norovirus infection feel very sick and vomit or have any diarrhea many times a day. The most common symptoms are:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomach cramps
- Fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Muscle Ache
- Tiredness

How long is a person contagious?

A person with norovirus infection can spread the illness from the moment they begin to feel ill until 3 days to 2 weeks after they recover. This is why controlling norovirus is so hard.

The illness can spread rapidly in child care centers, schools, and nursing homes.

How serious is norovirus?

Very young children, the elderly, and people with other illnesses can become dehydrated, which can lead to hospital stays and even death. Encourage those with norovirus to drink fluids such as water or juice. Antibiotics do not help with norovirus infections.

How is norovirus treated?

There is no cure for norovirus. Most people get better within 1-3 days. The best treatment is to drink plenty of fluids to replace the fluid lost from throwing up and diarrhea.

Can norovirus be prevented?

- **The best way to prevent norovirus infection is by washing your hands often with soap and water.** Teach children to wash their hands after using the toilet and before making, serving, or eating food.
- Hand sanitizers do not work well against norovirus.
- Noroviruses are very hard to kill with normal cleaning products. Clean and sanitize areas that have had vomit or diarrhea on them with a bleach-based cleaner or a mixture of 1 part bleach and 10 parts water. **Never** use undiluted standard bleach. Use a fresh bleach mix every day.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Do not prepare food for other people when you're sick and for at least 3 days after you're better.

For more information

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