

Noroviruses

What are noroviruses?

Noroviruses (also known as Norwalk-like viruses, caliciviruses, and small round structured viruses) cause acute gastroenteritis. Gastroenteritis is inflammation of the stomach and intestines, and usually causes nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea. Illness caused by this virus is often referred to as the “stomach flu.” Humans are the only known reservoir for these viruses. Outbreaks of norovirus have occurred in many different settings, including restaurants, catered events, schools, child care centers, camps, cruise ships, vacation settings, swimming pools, hospitals and long-term care facilities.

How do I get norovirus?

Noroviruses are extremely infectious, which allows for easy spread from person to person. The virus is highly concentrated in the stool and/or vomit of infected people.

- Transmission is primarily person-to-person via the fecal-oral route (ingestion of contaminated food or water or oral contact with contaminated surfaces).
- Good evidence exists for transmission due to aerosolization of vomitus that presumably results in droplets contaminating surfaces or entering the oral mucosa and being swallowed.
- People can spread norovirus to others if they fail to wash their hands properly after using the restroom or changing a diaper and then handling food or objects that others will put in their mouths (e.g., toys).
- People are most contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill until at least 48 hours after diarrhea and/or vomiting subsides. However, the virus has been detected in stool as long as two weeks after exposure to the virus.
- Some people may carry and spread norovirus without ever having symptoms.



Hand washing steps:

1. Use soap and warm running water.
2. Scrub hands for at least 20 seconds; use a nail brush.
3. Wash all surfaces:
 - Between fingers
 - Under fingernails
 - Back of hands
 - Wrists
4. Rinse well and dry hands with a clean paper towel.

Symptoms

Onset of symptoms is sudden. Symptoms begin 12-48 hours (usually 1-2 days) after ingesting the virus. The illness is usually brief, with symptoms lasting 12-60 hours. Symptoms can include:

- Nausea
- Diarrhea (not bloody)
- Vomiting (more prevalent among children)
- Stomach pain and cramping
- Low-grade fever
- Headache
- Severe dehydration, although rare, can be fatal, especially among older persons with debilitating health conditions.

(continued on back)



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Noroviruses (continued)

Prevention

- Wash your hands before preparing food, eating or handling dishes or baby toys.
- Always wash your hands after using the restroom, diaper changing or toilet training.
- Persons with norovirus should not prepare food for others.

Treatment of norovirus

There is no antiviral medication for treatment, nor is there a vaccine for prevention of norovirus. Most symptoms will go away on their own in a few days. If symptoms persist or are severe, see your health care provider. It is important to prevent dehydration by drinking fluids such as juice and water.

Cleaning for norovirus

- Use a 10% solution of household chlorine bleach (one cup of bleach per nine cups of water) to clean the area where the diarrhea and/or vomiting occurred. The solution needs to stay on the surface area for one minute to be effective. Due to the solution's high concentration, it should be rinsed off with water immediately after one minute.
- Hands need to be washed immediately after using the solution (wash hands with warm water and soap- hand sanitizing gels should not be used as an alternative to proper hand washing).
- ***Please be careful when using this solution, it is strong enough to bleach clothing and carpets.***
- Soiled linens and clothing should be handled as little as possible. Any linens or clothing soiled with diarrhea and/or vomit should be laundered separately in a hot water cycle.

If you think you have norovirus

- Do not prepare food for others.
- If your job includes food handling, working in healthcare or with children, do not go to work and see your healthcare provider.
- Children who have norovirus should not go to child care settings – especially if they have diarrhea.