

NOROVIRUS FACT SHEET

What is norovirus?

Norovirus is a viral illness. It is the most common cause of inflammation of the stomach and intestines (acute gastroenteritis) and of disease outbreaks due to contaminated food in the United States. Most norovirus outbreaks happen from November to April.

Who can get norovirus?

Anyone. You can become sick with norovirus many times in your life.

What are the symptoms of norovirus?

The most common symptoms include vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, and stomach pain. Other symptoms include fever, headache, and body aches. If you have norovirus, you can vomit or have diarrhea many times a day. This can lead to dehydration, especially in young children, older adults, and people with other illnesses. Symptoms of dehydration include a decrease in urination, dry mouth and throat, and feeling dizzy when standing up.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually develop 12–48 hours after being exposed to norovirus.

How does norovirus spread?

You can get norovirus from eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus, by touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus then putting your fingers in your mouth, or by having contact with someone who is infected with norovirus (for example, caring for or sharing food or eating utensils with someone with norovirus illness). Norovirus can spread quickly in closed places like daycare centers, nursing homes, schools, and cruise ships.

How can the spread of norovirus be prevented?

To protect against infection, wash your hands frequently with soap and water, scrubbing your hands for at least 20

seconds. You should wash your hands before eating, preparing, or handling food, and after using the toilet and changing diapers. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers should not be used as a substitute for washing hands with soap and water. You should also do the following to prevent against norovirus infections: 1) wash fruits and vegetables, 2) cook seafood thoroughly, 3) not prepare food or care for others when you are sick and for at least 2 days after symptoms are gone, 4) immediately clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces and objects, such as toys, doorknobs, tables, and counters, and 5) wash contaminated laundry immediately (such as clothes contaminated by vomit).

Is there a vaccine for norovirus?

No, there is no vaccine to protect against norovirus.

How is norovirus treated?

There is no specific treatment for norovirus. To help prevent dehydration you should drink plenty of liquids to replace fluid lost from vomiting and diarrhea. Most people with norovirus get better within 1 to 3 days.

Should a person with norovirus stay home from work or school?

Yes. Norovirus is very contagious. Isolation is recommended during the period in which you are most likely to spread the virus—while you have symptoms and for about 1–3 days after your symptoms are gone. Food service workers should stay at home when they have symptoms and for at least 2 days after symptoms are gone.

Where can I get more information?

Information about norovirus and other related health topics can be found at www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit www.doh.dc.gov or call (202) 442-9371.