

Norovirus

What is Norovirus?

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause acute gastroenteritis (inflammation of the stomach and intestines) in humans.

Who gets norovirus?

Anyone can get norovirus. However, those at a higher risk include:

- School children
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- Hospital patients
- Anyone with a challenged immune system

There are many different strains of norovirus, which makes it difficult for a person's body to develop long-lasting immunity. Therefore, norovirus illness can recur throughout a person's lifetime.

How is norovirus spread?

Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected people. Contamination may occur either by consumption of contaminated food or water, direct person-to-person transmission, exposure to a contaminated environment, or contact with contaminated objects. The virus is very contagious.

How can I prevent the spread of norovirus?

- Wash your hands thoroughly and often. Handwashing is the most important way to prevent infection.
- Minimize your contact with others if you have contracted norovirus. (You remain infected for 2-4 days after feeling better.)
- Cleanup and sanitize areas and items potentially contaminated by norovirus (e.g., sinks, toilets, door handles, faucets)

What are the symptoms of norovirus?

The typical symptoms of norovirus include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramping. Other symptoms can include headache, fever, chills, muscle aches, and a low-grade fever.

Symptoms of norovirus illness usually begin about 24 to 48 hours after ingestion of the virus, but they can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure.

How serious is norovirus?

People may feel sick and vomit many times a day, but most people get better within 1-2 days, and they have no long-term health effects related to their illness.

However, sometime people are unable to drink enough liquids to replace the liquids lost due to vomiting and diarrhea. These people can become dehydrated and may need special medical attention. The problem with dehydration is usually only seen among the very young, the elderly, and people with other illness.

Symptoms of dehydration in adults and children include a decrease in urination, a dry mouth and throat, and feeling dizzy when standing up. A dehydrated child may also cry with few or no tears and be unusually sleepy or fussy. Dehydration can lead to other serious problems. Severe dehydration may require hospitalization for treatment with intravenous (IV) fluids.

What is the treatment for norovirus?

There is no vaccine to prevent norovirus infection. There are no drugs to treat people infected with the virus. Antibiotic drugs will not help if you have norovirus infection.

People ill with norovirus who have diarrhea and are vomiting should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. The most helpful fluids for this purpose are oral rehydration fluids that can help to replace important nutrients and minerals lost due to vomiting and diarrhea. Other drinks that do not contain caffeine or alcohol can also help with mild dehydration. If dehydration is suspected or if symptoms persist or worsen, contact your healthcare provider.

How do I get more information on norovirus?

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: (269) 969-6383

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Web Site: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/gastro/norovirus-qa.htm>

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This fact sheet is meant to provide general health information and is not intended to be medical advice or otherwise take the place of your doctor's orders or to diagnose your specific health problems. Check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your health.

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