

NOROVIRUS

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Norovirus?

Noroviruses (previously called the Norwalk Virus, caliciviruses, or SASVs) are a group of viruses that cause acute gastroenteritis in humans, often referred to as “stomach “flu”. However, noroviruses are completely unrelated to influenza, a respiratory virus. Norovirus disease is usually not serious, although people may feel very sick and vomit many times a day. Most people get better within 1 or 2 days, and they have no long-term health effects related to their illness.

How is it spread?

Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected people. People can become infected with the virus in several ways, including:

- eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus;
- touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus, and then placing their hand in their mouth;
- having direct contact with another person who is infected and showing symptoms (for example, when caring for someone with illness, or sharing foods or eating utensils with someone who is ill).

Persons working in day-care centers or nursing homes should pay special attention to children or residents who have norovirus illness. This virus is very contagious and can spread rapidly throughout such environments.

How is it treated?

Currently, there is no antiviral medication that works against norovirus and there is no vaccine to prevent infection. Norovirus infection cannot be treated with antibiotics. Many people recover in two to three days after they become ill. Supportive treatment may be needed to prevent dehydration in severe cases.

How can we prevent Norovirus?

- Frequently wash your hands, especially after toilet visits and changing diapers and before eating or preparing food.
- Carefully wash fruits and vegetables, and steam oysters before eating them. Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness by using a bleach-based household cleaner.
- Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with virus after an episode of illness (use hot water and soap).
- Flush or discard any vomitus and/or stool in the toilet and make sure that the surrounding area is kept clean.
- Persons who are infected with norovirus should not prepare food while they have symptoms and for 3 days after they recover from their illness. Food that may have been contaminated by an ill person should be disposed of properly.

SYMPTOMS OF NOROVIRUS

Symptoms may appear 12-60 hours after exposure to the virus.

Often a person will have the following symptoms

- Vomiting
- Watery Diarrhea
- Abdominal Cramps
- Nausea
- Headache
- Low grade fever
- Chills
- Muscle Aches
- Fatigue

The illness often begins suddenly, and the infected person may feel very sick. The illness is usually brief, with symptoms lasting only about 1 or 2 days. In general, children experience more vomiting than adults.



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