

Norovirus

What is Norovirus?

- Norovirus is a virus that may be called the “stomach flu”. It causes the stomach and/or intestines to become inflamed. It is very contagious.

How is it spread?

Norovirus is found in the stool or vomit of infected people and spreads easily by:

- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with Norovirus.
- Touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth; it may survive on surfaces for days or weeks.
- Having direct contact with an infected person who has symptoms.

What are the symptoms?

- Sudden onset of vomiting, watery diarrhea, nausea, abdominal cramps, and generally feeling unwell.
- Fever, headache, or body aches may occur.
- Symptoms can last 24-72 hours.

When do symptoms start?

- Usually 10-50 hours after the virus enters your body. Most people feel better within 1-3 days.

How long is it contagious?

- You are most contagious while you are sick with Norovirus and for about 3 days after you recover. However, the virus can be found in your stool even before you feel sick. It can live in your stool for 2 weeks or more after you recover so it is important to wash hands frequently during this time.

How is it treated?

- There is no specific treatment.
- If you experience vomiting and diarrhea you should drink plenty of liquids to reduce the chance of becoming dehydrated.
- Seek medical attention if required.

How is it prevented?

Frequent and thorough hand washing especially:

- ✓ After using the toilet
- ✓ After changing diapers
- ✓ Before preparing and eating food.
- Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces frequently including toilets, taps, doorknobs, countertops, handrails.
- Wash fruits and vegetables well before eating.
- Cook seafood thoroughly.
- Do not drink untreated water.
- Do not prepare food or care for others while you are sick.
- Keep sick infants/children away from areas where food is being handled or prepared.
- Wash laundry soiled with stool or vomit :
 - ✓ Wear gloves to handle soiled items.
 - ✓ Use the longest wash cycle and machine dry.
- Avoid exposing infants and young children to those with diarrhea or vomiting.
- Do not drink untreated water.

You may need to stay home from childcare, school, work or group activities.

For further information, please contact the Communicable Disease Control Program staff at 705-474-1400 or 1-800-563-2808, ext 5229.

References:

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