

Facts & DETAILS

Norovirus

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What is norovirus?

Norovirus is a contagious disease caused by a group of viruses (caliciviruses). Common names for norovirus include stomach virus, "stomach flu," or food poisoning. Norovirus is **not** related to the flu (influenza), which is a respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus.

How common is norovirus?

Norovirus is the leading cause of foodborne illness (food poisoning) in the United States. There are many different norovirus strains, so a person can be ill with norovirus more than once.

How do people become infected?

Norovirus is highly contagious and can spread easily from person to person. Both stool (poop) and vomit are infectious. Ways people become infected include:

- Eating or drinking contaminated food or liquids
- Touching contaminated surfaces or objects, and then placing hands or other objects near the face
- Having direct contact with another person who is infected, including changing an infant's diaper.

What are the signs and symptoms of norovirus?

Symptoms include sudden onset of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping which may be worse in children. Other symptoms include low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue.

How long can I spread norovirus?

After exposure, symptoms appear in 12 to 48 hours and last about one to two days. People with norovirus are contagious from symptom onset until at least two days (up to two weeks) after they recover.

How is norovirus treated?

Norovirus is caused by a virus, so antibiotics won't work. There is no antiviral medication available for norovirus, but people should drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.

Who is at risk for severe disease?

Anyone can become infected with norovirus, but children less than five years old, people with weakened immune systems, and the elderly are most at risk for severe disease.

How can you prevent norovirus?

There is no vaccine for norovirus. Prevent infection by the following methods:

- Wash your hands after using the toilet, changing diapers, and preparing or eating food.
- Wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly.
- Immediately remove and wash norovirus contaminated clothing or linens after an episode of illness. Use hot water and soap.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness by using a bleach-based household cleaner. Visit the EPA website (www.epa.gov) for more information about disinfectants that work against norovirus.
- People who have norovirus should not prepare food or drinks for others until 48 hours after symptoms resolve. Throw away all food touched by an ill person.

For More Information:
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