

Q & A: Norovirus (“Stomach Virus”)

WHAT IS NOROVIRUS?

Norovirus is a virus that causes illness often referred to as “stomach flu” or viral gastroenteritis. Infection with norovirus is NOT related to the influenza or “flu” virus, which causes respiratory illness.



WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Vomiting and diarrhea are the most common symptoms. Symptoms may also include nausea, stomach cramps, fever, chills, aches, and fatigue. Children may experience more vomiting than adults.

WHEN DO SYMPTOMS START?

Symptoms typically begin 1 to 2 days after contact with the virus.

HOW LONG DO SYMPTOMS LAST?

Symptoms usually last 1 to 2 days. Symptoms may last longer in the very young, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems.

HOW IS NOROVIRUS DIAGNOSED?

A health care provider may diagnose norovirus infection based on your symptoms or by testing your feces. The San Diego County Public Health Laboratory may also test for norovirus during an outbreak.

HOW IS NOROVIRUS TREATED?

There is no specific treatment for norovirus infection. Most people get better on their own within 1-2 days. If you experience diarrhea or vomiting, drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Preventing dehydration is most important for the very young, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems. People with severe dehydration may require hospitalization.

IS NOROVIRUS CONTAGIOUS?

Norovirus is very contagious. It spreads easily from person to person. It takes as few as 10 virus particles to cause illness. Norovirus can live from weeks to months on surfaces.

SHOULD AN INFECTED PERSON STAY HOME?

Yes. People with norovirus should stay home until they no longer experience vomiting or diarrhea. Food handlers, health care workers, and child care workers should not return to work for at least 2 days after their last episode of diarrhea.

HOW LONG IS IT CONTAGIOUS?

People with norovirus infection are especially contagious during the first few days of their illness and for several days after they feel better.

HOW IS NOROVIRUS SPREAD?

Norovirus is found in the vomit and feces of an infected person. Norovirus can be spread through direct contact with an infected person or by eating food prepared by that person. It can also be spread by touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and then touching your mouth.

HOW CAN I AVOID NOROVIRUS?



- **Handwashing.** This is the number one way to avoid getting ill with norovirus. Talk to your household about hand washing, and teach children when and how to wash their hands. Wash your hands with liquid soap and warm water, scrub for about 20 seconds, and dry hands with clean towels:

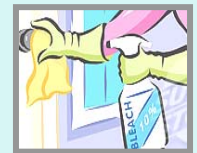
- After using the bathroom or changing diapers
- Before and after preparing, serving, or eating food
- After work, recreation, and visiting public places
- After contact with trash or soiled laundry
- After cleaning tasks
- Before and after visiting a day care, nursing home, hospital, or doctor’s office

- **Fast clean up after accidents involving vomit or feces.**

- Protect your clothes and wear gloves
- Use a mask if available
- Remove the vomit or feces carefully
- Use disposable towels and a bleach and water solution
- Disinfect the stain and the area and objects nearby
- Wash your hands with soap and water afterwards
- For complete details, see “NORO-Clean!” document

- **Frequent disinfection of frequently touched surfaces.**

- Kitchen and bathroom surfaces, remote controls, doorknobs, handles, sports gear, toys, tables, chairs, handrails, strollers, grooming items, phones, computer mouse and keyboards, light switches, car interiors, etc.



WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

More information about norovirus is available at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at <http://www.cdc.gov> Search Term: norovirus

