



Health and Human Services Department



Community Memorandum January 9, 2025

Norovirus is a very contagious virus that causes vomiting and diarrhea.

It is sometimes called the "stomach flu" or the "stomach bug." However, norovirus illness is not related to the flu. The flu is caused by the influenza virus. Norovirus causes acute gastroenteritis, an inflammation of the stomach or intestines.

Most people with norovirus illness get better within 1 to 3 days; but they can still spread the virus for a few days after. Norovirus can survive for weeks on surfaces and objects.

Who is at risk

Anyone can get infected and sick with norovirus. Children younger than 5 years old, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems are more likely to develop severe infections.

Signs and symptoms

A person usually develops symptoms 12 to 48 hours after being exposed to norovirus.

Most common symptoms: diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, stomach pain

Dehydration:

- Decreased urination
- Dry mouth and throat
- Feeling dizzy when standing up
- Crying with few or no tears
- Unusual sleepiness or fussiness

Other symptoms: Fever, headache, and body aches

How it spreads

Norovirus spreads **very easily and quickly** in different ways. You can get norovirus by:

- **Having direct contact with someone** with norovirus, like caring for them, sharing food or eating utensils with them, or eating food handled by them.
- **Eating food or drinking liquids** that are contaminated with norovirus.
- **Touching contaminated objects or surfaces** and then putting your unwashed fingers in your mouth.
- **Sharing toilet facilities with an ill person.**
- **Cleaning up** after an ill person.
- **Spreads quickly** in closed and crowded spaces.

You can still spread norovirus for 2 weeks or more after you feel better.

Prevention

Norovirus is very contagious, but you can take steps to protect yourself and others, including:

- Wash your hands well and often.
- Cook shellfish thoroughly and wash fruits and vegetables.
- Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces.
- Wear gloves when disinfecting or caring for an ill person with the virus.
- Wash laundry in hot water.
- Stay home when sick for 2 days (48 hours) after symptoms stop.

Treatment and recovery

Most people with norovirus illness get better within 1 to 3 days. There is no specific medicine to treat people with norovirus illness. Antibiotic drugs will not help treat norovirus infections because they fight bacteria, not viruses.

What to watch out for:

Dehydration

Watch for signs of dehydration (loss of body fluids) in children who have norovirus illness. Children who are dehydrated may cry with few or no tears and be unusually sleepy or fussy.

Drink plenty of liquids

If you have norovirus illness, you should drink plenty of liquids to replace fluid lost from vomiting and diarrhea. This will help prevent dehydration.

Seek medical care for severe dehydration

Dehydration can lead to serious problems. Severe dehydration may require hospitalization for treatment with fluids given through your vein (intravenous or IV fluids). If you think you or someone you are caring for is severely dehydrated, call your doctor.