

Fact Sheet: Norovirus

What are noroviruses?

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause gastroenteritis (the "stomach flu") in people. Viruses cannot grow outside of a person's body. However, norovirus can survive on surfaces for days. Norovirus is very contagious and can spread easily from person to person.

What are the symptoms?

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Stomach cramping
- Low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and tiredness (in some people)

Symptoms usually begin about 24-48 hours after exposure, but they may appear within 12 hours. The illness begins very suddenly and the infected person feels very sick. Symptoms usually last 1-2 days. People are contagious from the moment they become ill to at least 3 days after recovery. Some people may be contagious for up to 2 weeks after recovery.

How is it spread?

Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected persons.

People become infected by:

- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus
- Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus, and then touching your mouth
- Having direct contact with someone who is infected and showing symptoms
- Eating under cooked oysters from contaminated waters

How is it treated?

- There is no antiviral medication that works against norovirus and there is no vaccine to prevent infection
- Norovirus infection cannot be treated with an antibiotic
- For children, an oral rehydration fluid such as Pedialyte, Ceralyte, or Oralyte can be used to prevent dehydration.
- Adults should drink clear liquids and avoid alcoholic and caffeinated beverages.
- Talk to your health care provider if you or a family member is at risk of dehydration, or if symptoms do not improve after a couple of days.

How is it prevented?

- Wash your hands thoroughly and often, especially after using the restroom, changing diapers and before eating or preparing food.
- Use a hand sanitizer when you cannot wash your hands with soap and running water.
- Use a solution made with one part bleach to ten parts water to clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces.
- Immediately wash any soiled clothing or linens with hot water and soap.
- Flush any vomit or stool in the toilet and make sure the surrounding area is kept clean.
- Cook oysters completely to kill the virus.
- People who are infected with norovirus should not prepare food while they have symptoms or for 3 days after they have recovered. Any food that may have been contaminated by an infected person should be thrown away.

For Local Health Department Guidelines For Environmental Cleaning And Disinfection of Norovirus go to http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Guidelines_for_Environmental_Cleaning_126234_7.pdf

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self -diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider or call Washtenaw County Public Health at 734-544-6700.

