



Norovirus Fact Sheet

What is norovirus?

Norovirus (also known as Norwalk and Norwalk-like virus) is a viral infection, and is a common cause of diarrhea and vomiting sickness in the United States.

Who gets norovirus infection?

Any person of any age group can become infected. It occurs mainly in humans and is found in every part of the world. There are many strains of norovirus that makes it hard for the body to develop immunity to the virus.

How is norovirus spread?

Norovirus is spread by infected people or contaminated food and water. The virus is found in stool and vomit.

You may get norovirus if you:

- Eat food or drink liquids that have been contaminated with norovirus;
- Touch surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus, and then place your hands in your mouth;
- Have direct contact with another person who has the virus and has diarrhea or is vomiting (for example, when caring for someone or sharing foods or utensils).

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of norovirus infection include nausea, vomiting, non-bloody diarrhea, and stomach cramps.

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Headache and low-grade fever may also occur.

How soon after exposure do symptoms usually appear?

Most people will begin to have symptoms within 1 to 2 days, but some people may become ill as early as 10 hours or as late as 3 days.

How long do symptoms last?

Persons with norovirus usually recover within 2 to 3 days without serious or long-term health effects. Even though the virus is easy to spread, serious illness rarely occurs.

What is the treatment?

No specific treatment is available. People should drink plenty of clear fluids. Rarely, people may become sick enough to go to the hospital. There is no vaccine available and antibiotics should not be used.

If I get it once, will I get it again?

Norovirus infection only gives you short-term immunity. A person may get sick each time he/she comes in contact with the virus.

How can norovirus infection be prevented?

Here are ways to reduce your risk of getting or spreading the virus:

- Wash hands thoroughly after each toilet visit and before preparing food.

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- Wash fruits and vegetables and cook shellfish such as oysters and clams before eating them.
- Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness by using a bleach-based household cleaner.
- Remove and wash clothing or linens that are soiled with stool or vomit.
- Flush or discard any vomit and/or stool in the toilet and make sure that the surrounding area is kept clean.

*For further information, contact the
Oklahoma City-County Health Department
(405) 425-4437*

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