

Norovirus

What is Norovirus?

Norovirus illness is often referred to as the “stomach flu”, 24-hour flu, and the “cruise ship” virus.

There are many types of noroviruses and you can get it more than once.

Norovirus spreads very quickly! Outbreaks of norovirus have happened in nursing homes, child care centers, schools, restaurants, at catered events, and camps to name a few.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms begin 12-48 hours after coming into contact with norovirus. The illness is usually brief lasting 12-60 hours. Symptoms can include:

- Nausea
- Diarrhea (not bloody)
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain and cramping
- Low-grade fever
- Headache
- Severe dehydration is rare but can be serious.



How do I get Norovirus?

You become infected with norovirus by accidentally getting poop or vomit from others who are sick with norovirus in your mouth. This usually happens when:

- A person sick with norovirus doesn't wash their hands thoroughly after using the restroom or changing a diaper and then touch food or objects that others will put in their mouths (e.g. toys).
- A person sick with norovirus vomits nearby. The viral particles in the vomit eventually fall onto surfaces that are then touched by others.

Am I contagious?

People are most contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill until at least 48 hours after diarrhea and/or vomiting

resolves. However, the virus can stay in the poop of infected people for two weeks or more after symptoms resolve.

- Some people may carry and spread norovirus without having symptoms.

How can I prevent illness?

- Wash your hands before preparing food, eating or handling dishes or baby toys.
- Always wash your hands after using the restroom, diaper changing or toilet training.
- Persons with norovirus should not prepare food or medical care for others.
- Clean up diarrhea and/or vomit with soap and water. Disinfect afterwards using 1 cup of chlorine bleach per gallon of water. (see next page)



- Sick persons should use a separate bathroom from others.

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Health tip:

Hand washing steps:

- Use soap and warm running water.
- Scrub hands for at least 20 seconds; use a nail brush.
- Wash all surfaces:
 - Between fingers
 - Under fingernails
 - Wrists
- Rinse well and dry hands with a clean paper towel.
- Hand sanitizers should not be used in place of hand washing!

Treatment of norovirus

- There is no medication for treatment, nor is there a vaccine to prevent the illness.
- Most symptoms will go away on their own in a few days. If symptoms persist or are severe, see your health care provider. It is important to prevent dehydration by drinking fluids such as juice and water.

Cleaning for norovirus

- When cleaning up vomit and diarrhea, it is best to wear disposable gloves and a simple face mask.
- Use a solution of chlorine bleach (one cup of bleach per sixteen cups of water) to disinfect areas up to 25 feet where diarrhea and/or vomiting occurs. Spray the solution directly onto the vomit or fecal material and let sit for 10 minutes. Use towels to pick up any visible waste and place in a trash bag. Repeat until all visible waste has been removed. Again, spray the bleach solution on the area and let sit for 1 minute before finally rinsing off with water.

- Disinfect an area of 25 feet around the vomit or diarrhea.
- ***Be careful when using this solution, it is strong enough to bleach clothing and carpets.***
- Hands need to be washed immediately after using the solution.
- Soiled linens and clothing should be washed immediately and handled as little as possible. Any linens or clothing soiled with diarrhea and/or vomit should be laundered separately in a hot water cycle.

If you think you have norovirus

- Do not prepare food for others.
- If your job includes food handling, working in healthcare or with children, do not go to work and see your healthcare provider.
- Children and adults who have norovirus or are suspected of being infected should not go to child-care settings, especially if they are currently sick with diarrhea and/or vomiting.