

What is norovirus?

Norovirus is a very contagious virus that spreads very easily and quickly, causing common outbreaks. Outbreaks can happen anytime, but they occur most often from November to April. Some people call norovirus illness “food poisoning,” “stomach flu,” or “stomach bug.” Noroviruses are the leading cause of foodborne illness.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of Norovirus include diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, and stomach pain.

How long does this disease last?

An individual gets sick 12-72 hours after being infected. The contagious period usually from onset until 2-3 days after recovery; typically, virus is no longer shed after 10 days.

How is norovirus spread?

Norovirus is spread by having direct contact with an infected individual, touching contaminated surfaces and then putting unwashed hands in the mouth, or consuming contaminated food or water. It only takes a very small amount of virus particles to make you sick, and contamination can occur if an infected person touches food with their bare hands that have feces (poop) or vomit particles on them, if food is placed on a counter or surface that has feces or vomit particles on it, if tiny drops of vomit from an infected person spray through the air and land on the food, or if the food is grown or harvested with contaminated water (ex. oysters harvested from contaminated water, or fruit and vegetables irrigated with contaminated water in the field).

Who is at risk for norovirus?

Young children, the elderly, and people with other medical illnesses are most at risk for more severe or prolonged infection.

What preventive measures and treatments are available?

Good hand hygiene is the best way to prevent transmission of norovirus.

- Wash your hands with warm water and soap for a minimum of 20 seconds.
- Children should be taught good hand washing practices and should wash their hands after using the bathroom and before eating.
- Staff, especially staff responsible for caring for diapered children, should wash their hands frequently and particularly prior to contact with any diapered child.



GET THE FACTS

Norovirus

- During outbreaks, washing hands with soap and warm water is preferable to using alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers should only be used when washing with soap and warm water is not possible but not as a substitute to soap and warm water hand washing.

What should schools do?

School sends letter to exposed family and staff members

- School notify CDPH for clusters of cases
- Refer pregnant women to their healthcare provider

What are recommendations for exclusion?

- Exclude ill individuals until diarrhea has ceased for 24 hours
- Exclude ill individuals from food handling until 48 hours after recovery

For more information, visit [How Norovirus Spreads | CDC](#) or [Norovirus infection - Symptoms and Causes | Mayo Clinic](#). <https://www.cdc.gov/hai/organisms/norovirus.html>

