

What is norovirus?

Norovirus is a very contagious virus that spreads easily and quickly, commonly causing 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 in the U.S.

What are the symptoms?

Vomiting and diarrhea are the most common symptoms of norovirus, and can be accompanied by nausea, low-grade fever, and stomach pain.

How long does this disease last?

People usually start to have symptoms 12-48 hours after being exposed to the virus. Most people feel better within 1 to 3 days, but they can still spread the virus for a short time after.

How is norovirus spread?

- Through direct contact with an infected person.
- Touching contaminated surfaces and then putting unwashed hands in the mouth.
- Through aerosolized vomit from a person who is ill.
- Consuming contaminated food or water.

It only takes a very small amount of virus particles to make you sick. Contamination can occur if:

- An infected person touches food with their bare hands that have feces (poop) or vomit particles on them
- Food is placed on a counter or surface that has feces or vomit particles on it
- Tiny drops of vomit from an infected person spray through the air and land on the food
- 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?

Anyone can get sick with norovirus. Young children, the elderly, and people with other medical illnesses are most at risk for severe or prolonged symptoms.

What preventive measures and treatments are available?

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



GET THE FACTS

- 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.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not effective against norovirus. During norovirus outbreaks, alcohol-based hand sanitizers should only be used when washing with soap and warm water is not possible.

What should schools do?

- Notify CDPH in the event of a cluster (**4 or more cases or 10% of a classroom, grade, or cohort that shares the same exposures, within 24 hours**). Schools and daycares are required to report all confirmed or suspected outbreaks of gastroenteritis, including norovirus, as soon as possible. Gastroenteritis is when an illness causes inflammation of the stomach and intestines. Gastroenteritis may cause vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, and/or fever.
- Refer sick people to their healthcare provider for additional support.
- Immediately clean, then disinfect the entire area after someone vomits or has diarrhea.
 - Staff cleaning vomit/stool spills should wear masks as aerosolization of the virus can occur.
 - When cleaning vomit, use a product such as an absorbent powder to soak up excess liquid in the vomit first. Once product has solidified the vomit, scoop up the solidified vomit and dispose in the trash.
 - Cleaning and disinfecting with a product approved by the EPA as effective against norovirus or use a bleach solution. [EPA Products Effective Against Norovirus](#) can be used to determine whether your disinfecting agent is active against norovirus.
 - Notify exposed family and staff members in the event of a cluster.

What are recommendations for exclusion?

- Exclude ill people until diarrhea, vomiting, and fever have stopped for at least 24 hours
- Exclude ill people from food handling until 48 hours after recovery

For more information, visit [How Norovirus Spreads | CDC](#), [About Norovirus | CDC](#), or [Norovirus infection - Symptoms and Causes | Mayo Clinic](#).

