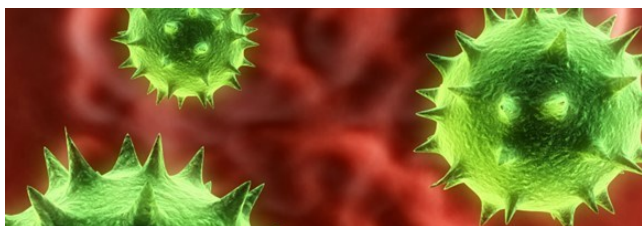


NOROVIRUS



What is Norovirus?

Norovirus is a very contagious virus, affecting 21 million Americans annually. The virus causes your stomach or intestines or both to get inflamed (acute gastroenteritis). This leads you to have stomach pain, nausea, and diarrhea and to throw up. Anyone can become infected with Norovirus. You can have Norovirus many times in your life, because there are multiple types of the virus. Norovirus can be serious, especially for young children and older adults. There is no vaccine or specific treatment for Norovirus, so prevention is crucial.

How common is Norovirus?

Norovirus is the most common cause of acute gastroenteritis in the United States. Each year, it causes about **19 to 21 million illnesses** and contributes to about 71,000 hospitalizations and 800 deaths. **Norovirus is also the most common cause of foodborne disease outbreaks in the United States.** Most Norovirus outbreaks happen from November to April in the United States. Norovirus is often called the “stomach flu,” but it is not related to the influenza (flu) virus.

How do people get infected with this virus?

You can become infected with Norovirus by accidentally getting stool or vomit from infected people in your mouth. This usually happens by:

- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with Norovirus.
- Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with Norovirus then putting your fingers in your mouth.

- Having contact with someone who is infected with Norovirus (for example, caring for or sharing food or eating utensils with someone with Norovirus illness).

Norovirus can spread quickly in closed places like schools, daycare centers, hospitals, nursing homes, summer camps, and cruise ships.

What can be done to prevent Norovirus infection?

Practice proper hand hygiene. Wash your hands carefully with soap and water, especially after using the toilet and changing diapers, and always before eating, preparing, or handling food.

Wash fruits and vegetables and cook seafood thoroughly. Carefully wash raw fruits and vegetables before preparing and eating them. Cook oysters and other shellfish thoroughly before eating them. Be aware that

Noroviruses are relatively resistant to heat. They can survive temperatures as high as 140° F and quick steaming processes that are often used for cooking shellfish.

When you are sick, do not prepare food or care for others who are sick, for at least 2 to 3 days after you recover. This also applies to sick workers in settings such as restaurants, schools and daycares where they may expose people to Norovirus.

Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces. After throwing up or having diarrhea, immediately clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces. Use a chlorine bleach solution (add 3/4 cup concentrated bleach (or 1 cup of regular bleach) in 1 gallon of water or other disinfectant registered as effective against Norovirus by the EPA.

Wash laundry thoroughly. Immediately remove and wash clothes or linens that may be contaminated with vomit or stool (feces). Handle soiled items carefully without agitating them, wear rubber or disposable gloves while handling soiled items (be sure to wash your hands after), and wash the items with detergent at the maximum available cycle length, then machine dry them on high heat.

How is the infection diagnosed?

The best way to detect Norovirus is in stool (fecal) specimens collected when a person has acute illness (within 48 to 72 hours after they get symptoms). Norovirus can sometimes be found in stool specimens collected 2 weeks after a person recovers.

What are the symptoms of Norovirus?

Symptoms of Norovirus can include diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, stomach pain, fever, headache, and body aches. People sick with Norovirus may vomit or have diarrhea many times a day, which can quickly lead to dehydration.

Symptoms of dehydration include decrease in urination, dry mouth and throat, and feeling dizzy when standing up.

How can Norovirus be treated?

There is no specific medicine to treat people with Norovirus illness. Norovirus infection cannot be treated with antibiotics because it is a viral (not a bacterial) infection.

If you have Norovirus illness, you should drink plenty of liquids to replace fluid lost from throwing up and diarrhea. This will help prevent dehydration. Sports drinks and other non-alcoholic drinks without caffeine can help with mild dehydration. But these drinks may not replace important nutrients and minerals.

Severe dehydration may require hospitalization. If you think you or someone you are caring for is severely dehydrated, call your doctor.

For more information, please contact:

San Bernardino County
Department of Public Health
Communicable Disease Section
dph.sbcounty.gov
(800) 722-4794

To report a possible foodborne outbreak, contact:

San Bernardino County
Department of Public Health
Division of Environmental Health Services
(800) 442-2283

Source: this information was taken from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website www.cdc.gov.