

NOROVIRUS

FACT SHEET

What are Noroviruses?

A group of viruses that cause the “stomach flu” or gastroenteritis.

Symptoms of Norovirus

Symptoms usually include:

- ✓ Nausea
- ✓ Vomiting
- ✓ Diarrhea
- ✓ Some stomach cramping
- ✓ Sometimes, a low fever, chills, headache

Symptoms may begin suddenly, but the illness is usually brief, with symptoms only lasting about 1-2 days. In general, children will experience more vomiting than adults.

How do People get Norovirus?

Noroviruses are found in stool or vomit of infected people. People can become infected in several ways, including:

- ✓ Eating food and/or drinking liquids contaminated with the virus
- ✓ Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with the virus and then placing their hand in their mouth
- ✓ Having close or direct contact with another person infected or showing symptoms

Noroviruses are very contagious and can spread rapidly— especially in day-care centers, nursing homes and other residential facilities. Particular care should be taken with young children in diapers who may have diarrhea.

Diagnosis and Treatment of Norovirus

Symptoms usually begin about 1-2 days after ingestion of the virus, but as early as 12 hours after exposure. From the moment someone falls ill to at least 3 days after symptoms end they are contagious. Some people may be contagious for as long as 2 weeks after recovery.

Currently there is no antiviral medication that works against Norovirus and no vaccine to prevent infection. Norovirus cannot be treated with antibiotics because they only work to fight bacteria, not viruses. It is best to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.

Norovirus is usually not serious, although people may feel very sick and may vomit many times a day. Most people get better within 1-2 days and have no long-term health effects related to their illness. However, sometimes people are unable to drink enough liquids to replace what they’ve lost due to the vomiting and diarrhea. These people may become dehydrated and need special medical attention. Dehydration is usually only seen in the very young, the elderly and persons with weakened immune systems.

How Can I Help Prevent the Spread of Norovirus?

Use good hand-washing techniques and other hygienic practices after revering from Norovirus or if you are around people with Norovirus.

- ✓ Wash hands frequently, especially after using the restroom, changing diapers and before preparing or eating food
- ✓ Carefully wash fruits and vegetables before eating them
- ✓ Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness using a bleach-based household cleaner
- ✓ Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with Norovirus after an episode of illness
- ✓ Flush or discard any vomitus and/or stool in the toilet and make sure the surrounding area is kept clean

Remember: even once symptoms have stopped, a person may still be contagious!

For more information, contact your local health department or visit www.cdc.gov