



NOROVIRUS

(Formally called Norwalk-like Virus)

What is NOROVIRUS?

Noroviruses are members of a group of viruses called caliciviruses, previously known as “Norwalk-like viruses.” Infection with norovirus affects the stomach and intestines, causing an illness called gastroenteritis. It is sometimes called the “stomach flu.” The virus was first identified in 1972 after an outbreak of gastrointestinal illness in Norwalk, Ohio.

How do people get Norovirus?

Noroviruses are found in the stool and vomitus of infected people. People get Norovirus infections in several ways such as eating food or drinking liquids contaminated with the Norovirus or touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus and then touching their mouth before washing their hands. Noroviruses are easily transmitted person to person by having direct contact with a person who is ill with norovirus. Outbreaks of Norovirus have taken place in restaurants, cruise ships, nursing homes, hospitals, schools, banquet halls, summer camps, and family dinners. Anyone can get Norovirus, but it is more common in adults and older children.

What are the symptoms of Norovirus?

The symptoms of Norovirus are nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea accompanied by abdominal cramps. Some people complain of headache, fever, chills, and muscle aches. Symptoms are usually brief and last only one or two days. However, during that brief period, people can feel very ill and vomit or have diarrhea, often violently and without warning, many times a day. Symptoms usually begin 24-48 hours after exposure to the virus, but can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure.

How is Norovirus diagnosed?

Norovirus can often be found in stool specimens of infected persons by using special tests. Diagnosis is often based on the combination of symptoms and the short duration of illness.

What is the treatment for Norovirus?

There is no specific treatment. Severely dehydrated persons may need to receive intravenous (IV) fluids in a healthcare setting.

How can Norovirus infections be prevented?

- Wash hands with soap and warm water after toilet visits and before preparing or eating food.
- Wash raw fruits and vegetables and steam oysters before eating them.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness by using a bleach-based household cleaner.
- Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with the virus after an episode of illness (use hot water and soap).
- Flush or discard any vomitus and/or stool in the toilet and keep the surrounding area clean.
- Food handlers with symptoms of Norovirus should not prepare or touch food during their illness and for three days after they recover.

Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/gastro/norovirus.htm>

Norovirus Outbreak Management and Disease Prevention Guidelines (March 2011):

http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr6003a1.htm?s_cid=rr6003a1_e

24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156

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