

Norovirus

What is norovirus?

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause diarrhea and/or vomiting in people.

What are the symptoms of norovirus infection?

Symptoms are nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and/or stomach cramping. Some people may have a low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches and/or may feel tired. Symptoms last 24-72 hours.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually begin 24-48 hours after exposure to the virus, but can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure.

What is the treatment for norovirus infection?

No specific treatment for norovirus infection is available. Most persons with norovirus will recover with plenty of fluids and rest. In severe cases, some individuals may require hospitalization and intravenous fluids.

How are norovirus infections spread?

Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of an ill person. The virus is spread through drinking water or eating food contaminated with feces from a sick person. Objects such as toys and other surfaces contaminated with feces or vomit from an infected person may also act a source of norovirus infection.

How long is an infected person able to spread norovirus?

People sick with norovirus can spread the virus from the moment they become ill to two or more weeks after symptoms stop. If norovirus is suspected, children with diarrhea should not attend day care until 72 hours after diarrhea has stopped. Individuals who provide direct patient care or who prepare food should not work until 72 hours after their symptoms stop, without the use of medications.

How can norovirus infection be prevented?

Good hand hygiene techniques and proper disposal of contaminated wastes (including diapers) can prevent spread of the virus. Wash hands thoroughly with warm running water and soap, using friction for 20 seconds. Hands should be washed after using the restroom, sneezing, coughing, changing diapers, cleaning up vomit or diarrhea, contact with a symptomatic person, or handling soiled clothing or linens. Hands should also be washed before eating, before any food preparation or service, and before providing healthcare services.

What are the recommended cleaning techniques for norovirus?

Surfaces contaminated with norovirus should be cleaned with soap and water, then disinfected with a bleach solution made with 1/3 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water. Leave bleach on surfaces for 10-20 minutes, then rinse with clean water. This solution must be mixed daily to be effective. Disinfectants other than bleach are not effective against norovirus. Examples of items to disinfect include: Doorknobs, faucets, sinks, toilets, other bathroom surfaces, phone, counters (especially areas where food is prepared), chairs, tables, and light switches.

Does a past infection make a person immune?

No. Because there are many different strains of norovirus, it makes it difficult for the person's body to develop long-lasting immunity. Therefore, norovirus can recur throughout a person's lifetime.