

NOROVIRUS

What are Noroviruses?

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause the “stomach flu,” or gastroenteritis, in people. Viruses are not affected by treatment with antibiotics, and cannot grow outside of a person’s body.

How is it spread?

Noroviruses are spread mainly by fecal-oral route. People can become infected with the virus in several ways including: eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated; touching contaminated surfaces and then placing their hand in their mouth; or having direct contact with another person who is infected and showing symptoms. Schools, daycare centers and nursing homes should pay special attention to infected children or residents because this virus is very contagious and can spread rapidly throughout such environments.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The signs and symptoms are nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches and a general sense of tiredness. Dehydration, especially in infants and the elderly, may occur.

What is the incubation period and how long is it communicable?

The incubation period is approximately 24 to 48 hours after digestion of the norovirus, but can sometimes be as short as 12 hours after exposure. Recovery time is usually 1-2 days after exposure, but a person is still considered contagious 3 days after they recover from their illness.

How can Norovirus infections be prevented?

Noroviruses are not affected by alcohol based hand sanitizers!

The best prevention is to wash your hands vigorously with soap and water especially:

- After:** Toilet visits
- Cleaning up vomitus or diarrhea (use gloves)
- Handling diapers (use gloves)
- Handling soiled clothes or linens (use gloves)
- Contact with a symptomatic person
- Before:** Eating

It is recommended to use spray bottles to apply the disinfectant (1 part bleach to 9 part cool water to be prepared daily) to contaminated surfaces such as toilets, sinks, floors, tables, water fountains or any areas where a sick individual has been.

What should I do?

No treatment is available, the best thing to do is drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Persons who experience severe symptoms should see their physician.

Children and adults with this illness should be free of symptoms for a minimum of 24 hrs before returning to childcare/school/work.

Clusters of two or more persons are considered a **reportable disease** to the Santa Rosa County Health Department (SRCHD).

For more information, please contact the Santa Rosa County Health Department at 850-983-5200

