Norovirus (Norwalk-Like Virus, or Noro infection)

What is norovirus?
Norovirus is a highly contagious virus that causes inflammation of the inner lining of the stomach and intestines. The illness often has a sudden and severe onset. It may also be referred to as:
- stomach bug or stomach “flu”*
- viral, non-bacterial, or acute gastroenteritis; or
- food poisoning (although there are many other causes of food poisoning).

* Norovirus is not related to the flu, a respiratory infection caused by the influenza virus.

How are symptoms diagnosed?
By testing a sample of stool or vomit (less common).

How can I prevent the spread of norovirus?
- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds:
  - after using the bathroom or changing diapers;
  - before eating or preparing foods; or
  - after cleaning contaminated surfaces.
- Wash infants’ hands and assist young children with hand washing.
- Do not send your child to daycare or school if s/he has diarrhea and/or vomiting.
- Do not go to work if you are a health care worker, food handler, or day care worker until at least 2-3 days after diarrhea and/or vomiting have stopped.
- Do not prepare food for others until at least 2-3 days after diarrhea and/or vomiting have stopped.
- Wash fruits and vegetables, and steam oysters before eating them.
- Do not swim while you have diarrhea and/or vomiting.
- After an episode of illness immediately:
  - flush/discard vomit and/or stool in the toilet;
  - remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated, using hot water and soap;
  - clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces; and
  - wash hands.

How do I clean and disinfect surfaces?
Many common household cleaners are not effective against norovirus. When disinfecting surfaces:
- Use a chlorine bleach solution with a concentration of 1000–5000 ppm (5–25 tablespoons of household bleach per gallon of water) or other disinfectant registered as effective against norovirus by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Leave the bleach disinfectant on the area for at least 5 minutes, then clean the entire area again with soap and hot water.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not as effective as washing hands with soap and water at removing norovirus particles.

For further information, visit:
- [https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/index.html)
- [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)

For a list of EPA-approved cleaning products that are effective against norovirus, visit:
- [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-06/documents/list_g_norovirus.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-06/documents/list_g_norovirus.pdf)

What are the symptoms?
Symptoms usually begin 24 to 48 hours after exposure, but can appear as early as 12 hours, and may include:
- vomiting;
- diarrhea;
- nausea; or
- abdominal cramps.

In most people the illness is self-limiting, with symptoms lasting for about 1 or 2 days. Dehydration can occur.

How is it spread?
It is found in the stool and vomit of infected people, and can spread by:
- consuming contaminated foods or liquids;
- touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then placing hands in the mouth; or
- having direct contact with another person who is infected (e.g., caring for someone with illness, or sharing foods or utensils with someone who is ill).

People can shed norovirus in their stool for 2 weeks or more after their symptoms stop.

What should I do if I have symptoms?
Stay home while you are symptomatic. Contact your healthcare provider if you have concerns about your illness.

Who gets norovirus infection?
Anyone can get norovirus. Infants, young children, the elderly, and immunocompromised people are at greater risk of dehydration.

How is norovirus diagnosed?
By testing a sample of stool or vomit (less common).

How is norovirus treated?
Most people with healthy immune systems will recover without treatment. Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.