

Norovirus

Norovirus is a virus that causes nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea. It is commonly called the “stomach flu,” although it is not related to influenza. Most people get better within 1-2 days but may be contagious for as long as 2 weeks. Norovirus illness is very contagious, and symptoms occur 10 hours to 2 days after exposure.

How is norovirus spread?

Noroviruses are very contagious and spread easily from person to person. The virus is in the stool and vomit of infected people. People can become infected by direct person-to-person contact, by contaminated food and water or by contaminated environmental surfaces and objects. Outbreaks also have occurred from eating undercooked oysters harvested from contaminated waters. People working in day-care centers or nursing homes should pay special attention to children or residents who have norovirus illness, as the virus can spread quickly in these places.

Who gets norovirus infection?

Anyone can become infected with these viruses. Because there are many different strains of norovirus, norovirus infection and illness can re-occur throughout a person’s lifetime.

What treatment is available for people with norovirus infection?

Currently, there is no specific medication or vaccine for norovirus. Norovirus infection cannot be treated with antibiotics. The treatment is oral rehydration; and if symptoms are not resolving, medications for nausea and vomiting and diarrhea can be prescribed by your healthcare provider.

See Schiffert Health Center’s handout on **Upset Stomach and Diarrhea** for more detailed information on what to eat and drink.

Do infected people need to be excluded from school, work or daycare?

Children should not go to daycare or school while they have diarrhea or vomiting. Once illness ends, children can return to daycare, but handwashing must be strictly monitored. Persons who work in nursing homes,

hospitals, or who handle food should stay out of work until at least three days after symptoms end.

How to prevent getting norovirus:

- ♦ Frequent handwashing with warm water and soap. Hand sanitizers may not kill norovirus.
- ♦ Promptly disinfecting contaminated surfaces with household chlorine bleach-based cleaners, such as Chlorox® liquid, Chlorox Wipes®.
- ♦ Avoid food or water from sources that may be contaminated . Do not share eating or drinking dishes/utensils with anyone. Some people may be contagious but many not have any symptoms yet.
- ♦ Cooking oysters completely to kill the virus .

For more information:
www.cdc.gov/norovirus