

■ WHAT IS NOROVIRUS?

Norovirus is a highly contagious virus that causes vomiting and diarrhea. It is sometimes referred as the “stomach flu,” but it does not have any relation to the influenza virus.

■ WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF NOROVIRUS?

The most common symptoms of norovirus are:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Stomach pain

Typically, symptoms start to develop 12-48 hours after exposure to norovirus.

■ HOW IS NOROVIRUS SPREAD?

Norovirus is spread by ingesting virus from the vomit or fecal matter of an infected individual. This usually happens by:

- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus.
- Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus and then putting your hands in your mouth.
- Having close contact with an infected person i.e. caring for or sharing food/utensils with an infected person.

Norovirus quickly spreads in enclosed places like daycares, nursing homes, schools, and cruise ships. It is possible to have norovirus in your stool before you even have symptoms. Additionally, you can continue to shed the virus in your feces for two weeks or more after you feel better.

■ HOW IS NOROVIRUS TREATED?

There is no specific treatment for norovirus, but it is recommended to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Most people recover from norovirus within 1 to 3 days.

Symptoms of dehydration include:

- Dry mouth and throat
- Decreased urination
- Dizziness when standing

■ HOW CAN I PREVENT THE SPREAD OF NOROVIRUS?

- Properly wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds after visiting the bathroom, changing diapers, and always before eating or preparing food.
- Hand sanitizers should not be used as a substitute for proper hand washing.
- Cook oysters and other shellfish thoroughly at temperatures above 140°F/60°C.
- When you are sick, do not prepare food or provide care for others till at least two days after you recover.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces contaminated with vomit or diarrhea with a bleach-based cleaner.
- Quickly machine wash and dry laundry soiled with vomit or diarrhea.

■ WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT NOROVIRUS?

California Department of Public Health:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Norovirus.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/index.html>

