

## What is norovirus?

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause diarrhea or vomiting in people. Anyone can become infected with these viruses. Since norovirus infection is not a reportable disease in Oklahoma, the number of cases that occur each year is unknown.

## What are the symptoms of norovirus infection?

Symptoms of norovirus infection include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramping. Sometimes people can also experience a low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches and may feel tired. The illness is brief, with symptoms lasting two to three days.

## How soon do symptoms appear?

The symptoms usually begin about 24 to 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. Antibiotics only work against bacterial infections and should not be used for norovirus.

## How are norovirus infections spread?

Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected people. The virus is spread through ingestion of water or food contaminated with feces from an infected person. Objects such as toys and other surfaces contaminated with feces from an infected person have also been known to transmit the virus.

## How long is an infected person able to spread norovirus?

People with norovirus infection can spread the virus from when they become ill to as long as three weeks after symptoms stop. Children with diarrhea should not attend day care until the diarrhea has stopped.

## 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, and before any food preparation or service.

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, and 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, phones, 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.

OSDH 07/08



Acute Disease Service

Oklahoma State  
Department of Health

For further information call or visit us on the World Wide Web  
Acute Disease Service  
Oklahoma State Department of Health  
Phone (405) 271-4060  
<http://ads.health.ok.gov>