

Norovirus Fact Sheet



What is norovirus infection?

Norovirus infection is a stomach/intestinal illness that occur occasionally or in outbreaks. The virus was first identified during a gastroenteritis outbreak in Norwalk, Ohio, in 1972. Outbreaks occur more often where there are more people in a small area. Most infections are not usually serious and people recover within 1 to 2 days and have no long term adverse health effects.

What are the symptoms?

Although the virus is easy to spread, serious illness rarely occurs. The most common symptoms include nausea, vomiting, and stomach cramps. Children often vomit more than adults. Diarrhea may occasionally accompany vomiting. Fever is usually low grade or absent. Infected people generally recover in one to two days.



What is the treatment for norovirus infection?

No specific treatment is available. Persons who become dehydrated should try to drink fluids, some suggestions: Pedialyte, Gatorade, water etc. Occasionally patients may need to be hospitalized to receive intravenous fluids.

How norovirus is spread:

People can become infected with the virus by:

- Eating food or drinking liquids infected with the virus.
- Touching surfaces or objects infected.
- Having person-to-person contact.
 - Being present while someone is vomiting
 - Sharing food or drink, or eating from the same utensils
 - Caring for a sick person
 - Shaking hands
 - Not washing hands after using the bathroom or changing diapers and before eating prepared food.



How can norovirus infection be prevented?

The following recommendations may reduce the risk of acquiring or spreading the infection:

- Wash hands thoroughly after each toilet visit and before preparing food.
- Keep hands away from your face, and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables; cook shellfish thoroughly before eating.
- People who experience nausea, vomiting or diarrhea should not attend school or work and should not handle food for others while ill.



How can I report a suspect case of norovirus infection?

Please contact the Health Department at (815) 720-4000.



Handwashing Tips for Parents and Children

WHY should you wash your hands?

Bacteria and viruses (germs) that cause illnesses are spread when you don't wash your hands.

If you don't wash your hands, you risk acquiring:

- The common cold or flu
- Gastrointestinal illnesses/Stomach illnesses
- Shigella or Hepatitis A
- Respiratory illnesses.

WHEN should you wash your hands?

You need to wash your hands several times every day. Some important times for you to wash your hands:

BEFORE:

- Preparing or eating food
- Treating a cut or wound
- Tending to someone who is sick
- Inserting or removing a contact lens

AFTER:

- Using the bathroom
- Changing a diaper or helping a child use the bathroom (don't forget the child's hands)
- Handling raw meats, poultry, or eggs
- Touching pets, especially reptiles
- Handling garbage
- Sneezing or blowing your nose, or helping a child blow their nose.
- Being in contact with a sick person
- Playing outside or with children and their toys

HOW should you wash your hands?

There is a right way to wash your hands. Follow these steps and you will help protect yourself and your family from illness.

Like any good habit, proper handwashing must be taught. Take the time to teach it to your children and make sure they practice.

STEP 1:

Use warm running water and plenty of soap. The soap doesn't have to be antibacterial.

STEP 2:

Rub hands together for at least 15 to 20 seconds to make a good lather. Make sure you scrub under your fingernails and the backs of your hands.

STEP 3:

Rinse well

STEP 4:

Dry your hands thoroughly. At home, provide each child with their own clean towel or paper towels. Use the towel to shut off the water faucet. Keep the faucet handles clean.

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Contact: Sue Fuller, Community Relations & Marketing Manager 815-720-4213

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For Immediate Release

Winnebago County Health Department reminds community that an increase of norovirus illness is very common this time of year

During the winter months of January through April, an increase of norovirus illness is a common occurrence. Currently, the Health Department is noticing an increase of norovirus illness in our community. The Winnebago County Health Department reminds residents that good personal hygiene is the best way to stop the spread of this illness, which is highly contagious and is spread from human to human, especially in a large group setting.

This illness is sometimes confused with the influenza which is a respiratory illness. Symptoms of norovirus is abdominal pain, body aches, headache, tiredness and low-grade fever. Symptoms typically last 1 to 2 days and subside on their own, usually with no long term health effects. Dehydration can be a problem with such infections, especially in the very young, the elderly and people with other illnesses.

Noroviruses can be spread by:

- Eating food or drinking liquids infected with the virus
- Touching infected surfaces or objects
- Having person-to-person contact
 - Being present while someone is vomiting
 - Sharing food or drink, or eating from the same utensils
 - Caring for a sick person
 - Shaking hands
 - Not washing hands after using the bathroom or changing diapers and before eating prepared food

Persons can help reduce their risk of coming in contact with noroviruses by taking these precautionary steps:

- Staying home when ill to reduce the risk of infecting others.
- Frequently wash your hands, especially after toileting or changing diapers and before eating or preparing food.
- Carefully wash fruits and vegetables, and steam oysters before eating them.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of diarrhea or vomiting by using a bleach-based household cleaner. If using liquid household bleach prepared daily, one part bleach to nine parts water (1:10 dilution) is recommended.
- Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with feces or vomitus (use hot water and soap).
- Flush or discard any vomitus and/or stool in the toilet and make sure that the surrounding area is kept clean.

For more information from CDC on norovirus illness that includes environmental prevention procedures go to <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Topics/norovirus.htm>.

For the CDC norovirus illness key facts pdf which provides tips to prevent the spread of the virus go to <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/gastro/downloads/norovirus-keyfacts.pdf>, or contact the Winnebago County Health Department at www.wchd.org, or by phone at 815-720-4000.

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Winnebago County Health Department –Norovirus Information

<http://www.wchd.org/contentPage.asp?pgID=883&pgName=Environmental Health>

Norovirus Prevention for Health Care Facilities

<http://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/pdf/norovirus/Norovirus-Guideline-2011.pdf>

Norovirus Fact Sheet for Food Handlers

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/gastro/norovirus-foodhandlers.htm>

EPA List of Approved Agents Effective Against Norovirus

http://www.epa.gov/oppad001/list_g_norovirus.pdf

CDC Website with information on virus viability and cleaning methods

<http://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/norovirus/tables/evidence-table-q3-ron.html>