

Preventing Noroviruses

Noroviruses are a group of related viruses that affect the stomach and intestines, causing an illness called gastroenteritis (GAS-tro-en-ter-I-tis), which is inflammation of the stomach and intestines.

Anyone Can Get Norovirus

Anyone can be infected with noroviruses, which can strike more than once. Noroviruses are the most common cause of gastroenteritis in the United States, and they spread very easily. They affect 20 million Americans annually, and are also estimated to cause over 70,000 hospitalizations and 800 deaths each year in the United States.

While cases of food poisoning can be caused by noroviruses, other germs and chemicals can also be responsible. Norovirus illness is often called stomach flu or stomach virus, though it is not related to influenza, which is a respiratory illness.

Many Names, Same Symptoms

Symptoms of norovirus infection usually include diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, and stomach cramping. Other, less common symptoms may include low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and a general sense of fatigue.

Norovirus illness is usually not serious: most people recover in 1 to 2 days. But norovirus illness can be serious in young children, the elderly, and people with other health conditions; it can lead to severe dehydration,



hospitalization and even death. If you think you or someone you are caring for is severely dehydrated, contact your doctor.

How it Spreads

Noroviruses can spread quickly from person to person in crowded, closed places like long-term care facilities, daycare centers, schools, restaurants, hotels, and cruise ships.

The viruses are found in the vomit and stool of infected people. You can get them by consuming anything contaminated (someone gets stool or vomit on their hands, then touches food or drink), touching surfaces or objects contaminated with a norovirus and then putting your hand or fingers in your mouth, or having direct contact with a person who is infected with a norovirus (for example, when caring for someone with norovirus or sharing foods and/or eating utensils with them).

People with norovirus illness are contagious from the moment they begin feeling sick until at least 3 days after

they recover. But some people may be contagious for even longer.

Stop Noroviruses

As there is no cure or medical treatment for noroviruses, prevention is the best method. Practice proper hand hygiene, wash food carefully, do not prepare food while infected (in-

cluding 3 days after symptoms stop), clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces, and wash laundry thoroughly (handled with gloves). Learn more at <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Norovirus/> (Source: CDC)

HIGHLIGHTS

Noroviruses are a leading cause of disease from contaminated foods in the United States. Foods that are most commonly involved in food-borne norovirus outbreaks include leafy greens (such as lettuce), fresh fruits, and shellfish (such as oysters). However, any food item that is served raw or handled after being cooked can become contaminated with noroviruses.

Symptoms of dehydration, a common result of noroviruses, include a decrease in urination, a dry mouth and throat, and dizziness when standing up. Children who are dehydrated may also cry with few or no tears and be unusually sleepy or fussy.

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