



CALHOUN COUNTY

Public Health Department

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Fact Sheet

Norovirus

What is norovirus?

Noroviruses are a group of highly contagious viruses that cause acute gastroenteritis (inflammation of the stomach and intestines) in humans. Norovirus is the most common cause of acute gastroenteritis in the United States. It is commonly referred to as stomach flu or stomach bug. Norovirus is not related to the flu.

Who gets norovirus?

Anyone can get norovirus. However, those at a higher risk include:

- School children
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- Hospital patients
- Anyone with a challenged immune system

There are many strains of norovirus, making it difficult for a person's body to develop long-lasting immunity. Therefore, norovirus illness can recur throughout a person's lifetime.

How is norovirus spread?

Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected people. Contamination may occur either by consumption of contaminated food or water, direct person-to-person transmission, exposure to a contaminated environment, or contact with contaminated objects. A person is most contagious when they are sick with norovirus and during the first 3 days after they recover from the illness.

What are the symptoms of norovirus?

Symptoms of norovirus illness usually begin about 24 to 48 hours after ingestion of the virus, but they can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure. The illness usually lasts 1 to 3 days.

The most common symptoms of norovirus are:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Stomach Pain
- Fever
- Headache
- Body aches

How serious is norovirus?

People may feel sick and vomit many times a day, but most people get better within 1-3 days, and they have no long-term health effects related to their illness.

However, sometimes people are unable to drink enough liquids to replace the liquids lost due to vomiting and diarrhea. These people can become dehydrated and may need special medical attention. The problem with dehydration is usually only seen among the very young, the elderly, and people with other illnesses.

Common symptoms of dehydration include:

- Decrease in urination
- Dry mouth and throat
- Feeling dizzy when standing up
- Cry with few or no tears

What is the treatment for norovirus?

There is no vaccine to prevent norovirus infection. There are no drugs to treat people infected with the virus. Antibiotic drugs will not help if you have a norovirus infection.

People ill with norovirus who have diarrhea and are vomiting should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. The most helpful fluids for this purpose are oral rehydration fluids that can help to replace important nutrients and minerals lost due to vomiting and diarrhea. Other drinks that do not contain caffeine or alcohol can also help with mild dehydration. If dehydration is suspected or if symptoms persist or worsen, contact your healthcare provider.

How can I prevent norovirus?

- Wash your hands carefully with soap and warm water, especially after using the toilet, changing diapers, and always before eating or preparing food.
- Minimize your contact with others if you have contracted norovirus. (You remain infected for 2-4 days after feeling better.)
- Cleanup and sanitize areas and items potentially contaminated by norovirus (e.g., sinks, toilets, door handles, faucets) with a bleach-based household cleaner.
- If you are feeling sick, do not prepare food or care for other people.
- Immediately wash all clothing or linens that have been contaminated with vomit or fecal matter.

How do I get more information on norovirus?

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: 269-969-6383

 www.facebook.com/CCPublicHealthDepartment/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Phone: 800-232-4636 (800-CDC-INFO)

Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/index.html>

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

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This fact sheet is meant to provide general health information and is not intended to be medical advice or otherwise take the place of your doctor's orders or to diagnose your specific health problems. Check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your health.