

# Norovirus

## What is Norovirus?

Norovirus is a common virus that is passed from person to person and causes abrupt onset of diarrhea and vomiting. Most infections and outbreaks are seen during the winter months, affecting people of all ages.

The virus spreads easily in areas where there are large numbers of people together for several days or more, such as hospitals, residential care facilities, schools, etc.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms begin around 12 to 48 hours after infection, sometimes much quicker, and generally last 24 to 72 hours.

The main symptoms are sudden onset of:

- nausea
- Abdominal cramping
- chills
- fever
- usually vomiting and/or diarrhea

***Did You Know...*** The Virus was formerly named Norwalk virus after Norwalk, Ohio, where an outbreak occurred at Bronson Elementary school in 1968. The Virus is also very fittingly called the winter vomiting bug.

## How is Norovirus spread?

It is spread primarily through the fecal-oral route, either by:

- direct person to person spread
- fecal contamination of food and water
- via a droplet route from emesis
- shellfish are a vector of outbreaks as well.

Norovirus has the ability to survive a long time outside of the body, depending on the surface and temperature conditions. It can stay for weeks on hard surfaces, and up to twelve days on contaminated fabrics, and can survive for months, even years in contaminated still water.

- It only takes a very small amount of norovirus particles (fewer than 100) to make a person sick.
- People with norovirus shed billions of virus particles in their stool and vomit and can easily infect others.
- Clients can be contagious from the moment they begin feeling sick and for the first few days after they recover.





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### **Additional Precautions for Norovirus:**

Maintain CONTACT and DROPLET precautions until the client has been asymptomatic for at least 48 hours and has had a normalized stool.

### **Hand Hygiene**

Actively promote hand hygiene among healthcare personnel, patients, and visitors in all patient, resident and client care areas. Key moments for handwashing are before meals, after using the bathroom, and when hands are soiled.

Ease of transmission, a very low infectious dose, a short incubation period, environmental persistence and a lack of immunity following infection, enable norovirus to spread quickly.

<https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/norovirus/229110-ANoroCaseFactSheet508.pdf>

### **Considerations:**

The elderly, immunocompromised clients and those with significant medical co-morbidities can experience a prolonged illness time and more severe outcomes.

### **Complications:**

Dehydration is the most common complication and can become a serious concern for people with poor health.

### **How can norovirus be prevented?**

- Be meticulous about cleaning your hands with alcohol hand rub or soap and water if visibly soiled
- Do not share ANY food
- Keep your hands away from your face

**If you are at work and have symptoms of diarrhea and/or vomiting, report it to your manager/supervisor immediately and go home. Remain off work until you have been well for at least 48 hours with no symptoms.**