

Norovirus



Noroviruses are a group of viruses which can cause illness often referred to as:

- Stomach flu (NOT the same as influenza).
- Acute, viral, or non-bacterial gastroenteritis (which means inflamed stomach or intestines).
- Food poisoning (although there are many other causes of food poisoning as well).
- Winter Vomiting Disease or Norwalk Virus.

What are the symptoms this infection can cause?

- Nausea.
- Vomiting (may be more common in children).
- Diarrhea.
- Stomach cramping.
- low-grade fever.
- Chills.
- Aches.
- Tiredness.

Symptoms often begin 24 to 48 hours after catching the virus, and last about one or two days. Those who are ill can pass on the virus for up to two weeks after symptoms are gone. There are no long term effects of the illness.

When should I see my doctor?

If you have the above symptoms, you should stay home, especially if you work in food service, or personal care. If you are not better after 3 days, or if severe dehydration is suspected, you should see a medical professional. Young children and the elderly tend to get dehydrated more often, and may need medical attention sooner. If you think food may have made you ill, call your local GSC office, and tell your physician.

How does it spread?

Norovirus spreads easily from person to person. Special care must be taken by those who work in child care settings, nursing homes, personal care homes, and hospitals to prevent transmission.

Norovirus can be found in the stool or vomit of infected people. People can become infected by:

- Eating food or water that has come into contact with the virus.
- Touching surfaces or objects that have come into contact with the virus, and then touching their mouths.
- Close contact (such as sharing food/drink/eating utensils) with an infected person

How is it treated?

Most people who become sick with norovirus will get better on their own. People with diarrhea and vomiting must drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Antibiotics are not used to treat a viral illness.

How can I keep from getting this illness?

Wash your hands with soap and warm water before handling foods and eating. (If possible, avoid preparing food for others when you are sick.)

Wash your hands with soap and warm water after:

- Cleaning up vomit or stool.
- Changing diapers.
- Using the toilet.
- Wash fruits and vegetables carefully, and cook shellfish before eating them.
- Clean, then disinfect dirty, or often-touched, surfaces with a household bleach solution of about 0.1% (roughly 1 part 5% bleach to 50 parts water).
- Wash any soiled clothing promptly.

How soon can I return to work after being sick?

Health care workers and food handlers must be symptom free (no vomiting or diarrhea) for 48 hours before returning to work, and must abide by strict handwashing procedures.

Food Safety Awareness

Most foodborne illness can be avoided by following these simple food safety tips:

CLEAN:

Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.

- Before handling food or eating.
- After handling raw meats, using the toilet, touching pets/animals and changing diapers.

Wash counters, utensils, cutting boards, and other surfaces after they come into contact with raw meat.

COOK

- Cook all meats, poultry, and eggs to a proper internal temperature, as listed in the table.
- Keep all hot foods at 60°C (140°F) or more, to prevent the growth of bacteria.
- Use a kitchen thermometer to check cooking and storage temperatures.

CHILL

- Chill all leftovers promptly to keep them out of room temperature.
- Refrigerate all perishable foods at 4°C (40°F) or less, to prevent the growth of bacteria.
- Thaw frozen foods in a refrigerator, cold water, or a microwave oven, not at room temperature.

SEPARATE

- Use separate cutting boards for raw meats, and raw fruits and vegetables.
- Store raw meats below ready-to-eat foods, on lower refrigerator shelves, to prevent contamination caused by dripping.

Action	Temperature required
Refrigeration	4°C (40°F) or less
Freezing	Minus 18°C (0°F) or less
Cooking	
Food Mixtures containing Poultry, Eggs, Meat, Fish or other potentially hazardous foods	Internal Temperature of 74°C (165°F) for at least 10 minutes
Pork, Lamb, Veal, Beef (whole cuts)	Internal temperature of 70°C (158°F)
Rare Roast Beef	Internal temperature of 63°C (145°F) for 3 minutes
Poultry	Internal temperature of 85°C (185°F) for 15 seconds
Stuffing in Poultry	74°C (165°F)
Ground Meat	71°C (160°F)
Eggs	63°C (145°F) for 15 seconds
Fish	71°C (160°F)
Reheating	74°C (165°F)
Holding Hot Foods	60°C (140°F)
Cooling	60°C (140°F) to 20°C (68°F) within 2 hours 20°C (68°F) to 4°C (40°F) within 4 hours



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