



Norovirus Fact Sheet

Maricopa County Department of Public Health

What are Noroviruses?

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause the “stomach flu” or gastroenteritis in people.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms usually include nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, and can also include stomach cramps, fever, muscle aches, and a general feeling of tiredness.

How are Noroviruses spread?

Noroviruses are found in the stool and vomit of infected people. Others can be infected by touching objects that have been contaminated with stool or vomit and then placing their hands in their mouth, having direct contact with someone who is ill with norovirus, or by eating or drinking food or water contaminated with norovirus. Spread has also been documented through aerosolization of droplets during vomiting.

How long after exposure do symptoms begin?

Symptoms usually begin with 24-48 hours after exposure, however documented illness has begun in as little as 12 hours and as long as 72 hours after exposure.

Are Noroviruses contagious?

Yes. Noroviruses are extremely contagious and can be spread easily from person to person.

How long is a person contagious with Norovirus?

Most people are contagious from when symptoms begin until 3 days after symptoms end. However, studies have shown that virus can be shed in stool for up to 2 weeks after infection.

Is there any treatment for Noroviruses?

There is no specific treatment for Norovirus infection. People ill with Norovirus who have diarrhea and vomiting should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.

How can Norovirus infection be prevented?

The key to preventing Noroviruses is proper sanitation and good hygiene. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water before eating/preparing food and after using the bathroom or after diapering/toileting a small child. Contaminated surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected with a bleach base household cleaner, and clothing or linen that may be contaminated with the virus should be washed in hot soapy water.

A recent publication in the American Journal of Infection Control (Blaney et al, 2011:1-6) provides evidence that use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers preferentially over hand-washing in long term care facilities increases the risk of acute gastroenteritis outbreaks, including those caused by norovirus. Based on this study and several others demonstrating that alcohol-based hand sanitizers are ineffective against norovirus, ADHS and MCDPH recommend that long term care facilities and other institutional settings such as schools and correctional facilities use **hand washing as the primary method of hand hygiene during an acute gastroenteritis outbreaks**. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are still highly effective against many other germs, and so their use is still recommended when a gastrointestinal outbreak is not occurring.

You can get more information from your personal doctor, or you can call the Maricopa County Department of Public Health at (602) 372-2621. You can also go to the following websites:

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

<http://www.maricopa.gov>