

NOROVIRUS

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Norovirus?

Norovirus can produce an infection of the intestinal tract, with symptoms of nausea, diarrhea and vomiting. It is a common water and foodborne illness that can occur in all age groups. It is usually a self-limited, mild to moderate illness lasting 24-72 hours with an average incubation period of 16-48 hours.

How is it spread?

- The virus may be spread through the fecal-oral route when food is contaminated by servers who prepare or handle food, who have not properly washed their hands.
- Contamination of food can also occur when sewage pollutes the waters where shellfish grow (clams, oysters).
- Foods commonly contaminated include: raw shellfish, prepared green salads, frostings, pastry filling, fruits, deviled eggs, prepared sandwiches.
- The virus is spread during the acute stage of the illness and up to 48 hours after diarrhea stops.

How is it treated?

- Norovirus can be diagnosed by checking a stool sample. Lab testing is difficult and is done only if there is an apparent outbreak.
- Usually the only treatment is to replace fluids lost due to diarrhea.

How is it prevented?

- Practice good personal hygiene and hand washing.
- Use safe food and water supplies.
- Cook foods thoroughly.
- Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before serving.

Dehydration may occur if fluid loss from vomiting and diarrhea is prolonged, requiring a doctor's attention.

SYMPTOMS OF NOROVIRUS

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain/cramps
- Diarrhea
- Low-grade fever
- Headache