

What is Norovirus?

Norovirus is a group of viruses that cause viral gastroenteritis. Gastroenteritis means inflammation of the stomach and small and large intestines. It is often referred to as the “stomach flu,” although it is not caused by the influenza virus.

What are the symptoms of Norovirus?

The symptoms are a sudden onset of watery diarrhea, nausea and vomiting. Headache, fever or stomach cramps are also common. The symptoms begin 1 to 2 days following infection with the virus and may last 12 to 60 hours, usually the symptoms resolve in less than 48 hours.

Is Norovirus a serious illness?

Not for most people. It can be serious for infants, young children or elderly, who are more at risk for dehydration. They may need to be hospitalized if their dehydration becomes severe.

Is the illness contagious? How are these viruses spread?

Yes, Norovirus is contagious. The virus is transmitted by someone who is ill and does not wash their hands properly. It can then be passed on directly from that person to someone else, through contact with contaminated surfaces or through contaminated food or water. A person that was ill with Norovirus can still have the virus in their stool for 48 hours after their symptoms resolve.

How does food get contaminated by Noroviruses?

Food may be contaminated by ill food handlers, especially if they do not wash their hands thoroughly after using the washroom

How is Norovirus treated?

The most important way to treat Norovirus is to prevent dehydration by drinking fluids. Your physician may give you specific instructions about what kinds of fluids to have.

Can Norovirus be prevented?

Yes. People can reduce their chance of getting infected by:

- Frequent and thorough handwashing.
- Thorough cleaning and disinfection of potentially contaminated surfaces (such as faucets, door handles, toilet seats).
- Exclusion of ill individuals from daycare, school etc.