

# IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

## NOROVIRUS

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause the “stomach flu”, or gastroenteritis in people. This “stomach flu” is not related to the flu (or influenza), which is a respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. Noroviruses are very contagious and can spread easily from person to person.

### Symptoms

Symptoms usually begins suddenly within about 24 to 48 hours, sometimes as early as 12 hours after exposure to the virus. Symptoms usually include:

- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea
- Low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and a general sense of tiredness may also occur.
- The illness is usually brief, with symptoms lasting only about 1 or 2 days.
- In general, children experience more vomiting than adults.

### Transmission

- Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected people.
- People can become infected by eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus, touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus and then placing their hand in their mouth, or by having direct contact with another person who is infected and showing symptoms (for example, when caring for someone with illness, or sharing foods or eating utensils with someone who is ill).

### Treatment

- There is no specific treatment for norovirus. Viruses cannot be treated with antibiotics.
- By drinking fluids such as juice and water, people can reduce their chances of becoming dehydrated.

### Prevention

- Frequent hand hygiene is always the best defense. This includes washing hands for at least 15-20 seconds (sing the happy birthday song twice). Using alcohol-based hand sanitizer works for some kinds of germs, but washing hands with soap and water is the best at killing noroviruses.
- If you've had the bug, use a bleach-containing cleaner to disinfect all surfaces. Wear disposable gloves, and don't forget "frequent touch" surfaces like door knobs and light switches. After cleaning, dispose of or sanitize rags in hot water and bleach. Disinfect laundry by washing with hot water and bleach (see container for directions) and drying on "high."
- Always wash raw food before eating, and don't eat food prepared by someone who is ill until 2-3 days after symptoms have cleared. Do not share drinking glasses or bottles.
- Discard solid waste (vomit or poop) in the toilet. Close the lid when flushing.

### Additional Information

People who are infected with norovirus should not handle food for anyone else until at least 3 days after their symptoms are gone. Large outbreaks have occurred because people who handle food at work were sick but went to work anyway. Stay home from work if you are sick, especially if you serve or touch food.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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