



Weill Cornell Medical College

ClinicalKey®

Patient Education:

Norovirus Infection

Elsevier Interactive Patient Education ©2016 Elsevier Inc

Norovirus Infection

A norovirus infection is caused by exposure to a virus in a group of similar viruses (*noroviruses*). This type of infection causes inflammation in your stomach and intestines (*gastroenteritis*). Norovirus is the most common cause of gastroenteritis. It also causes food poisoning.

Anyone can get a norovirus infection. It spreads very easily (*contagious*). You can get it from contaminated food, water, surfaces, or other people. Norovirus is found in the stool or vomit of infected people. You can spread the infection as soon as you feel sick until 2 weeks after you recover.

Symptoms usually begin within 2 days after you become infected. Most norovirus symptoms affect the digestive system.

CAUSES

Norovirus infection is caused by contact with norovirus. You can catch norovirus if you:

- Eat or drink something contaminated with norovirus.
- Touch surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus and then put your hand in your mouth.
- Have direct contact with an infected person who has symptoms.
- Share food, drink, or utensils with someone who is sick with norovirus.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of norovirus may include:

- Nausea.
- Vomiting.
- Diarrhea.
- Stomach cramps.
- Fever.
- Chills.
- Headache.
- Muscle aches.
- Tiredness.

DIAGNOSIS

Your health care provider may suspect norovirus based on your symptoms and physical exam. Your health care provider may also test a sample of your stool or vomit for the virus.

TREATMENT

There is no specific treatment for norovirus. Most people get better without treatment in about 2 days.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Replace lost fluids by drinking plenty of water or rehydration fluids containing important minerals called electrolytes. This prevents dehydration. Drink enough fluid to keep your urine clear or pale yellow.
- **Do not** prepare food for others while you are infected. Wait at least 3 days after recovering from the illness to do that.

PREVENTION

- Wash your hands often, especially after using the toilet or changing a diaper.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly before preparing or serving them.
- Throw out any food that a sick person may have touched.
- Disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after someone in the household has been sick. Use a bleach-based household cleaner.
- Immediately remove and wash soiled clothes or sheets.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach pain is getting worse.
- Your symptoms of norovirus do not go away after 2–3 days.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

You develop symptoms of dehydration that do not improve with fluid replacement. This may include:

- Excessive sleepiness.
- Lack of tears.
- Dry mouth.
- Dizziness when standing.
- Weak pulse.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

Document Released: 03/09/2004 Document Revised: 01/08/2016 Document Reviewed: 05/28/2015
Elsevier Interactive Patient Education ©2016 Elsevier Inc.