

## NOROVIRUS

Noroviruses are a group of related viruses. Infection with these viruses causes gastroenteritis, which is inflammation of the stomach and intestines. This leads to stomach cramping, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Though norovirus is often incorrectly called the “stomach flu”, it is not caused by the influenza virus.

### CAUSE

Norovirus (previously known as calicivirus, Norwalk virus, or Norwalk-like virus)

### SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of norovirus illness usually include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping. Sometimes people also have a low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and tiredness. People may suddenly feel very sick and vomit frequently or have several episodes of diarrhea, but most people get better within 1 or 2 days and they have no long-term health effects related to their illness. Diarrhea is more common in children and vomiting is more common in adults. Dehydration may occur because of the loss of fluids through vomiting and diarrhea.

### SPREAD

The viruses leave the body through the stool of an infected person and enter another person when hands, food, or objects (such as toys) contaminated with stool are placed in the mouth. **Norovirus can persist on surfaces for up to 2 weeks if they are not cleaned properly.** Spread can occur when people do not wash their hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. People can also get sick by consuming contaminated food or water. Aerosolized spread from vomiting is possible. Person-to-person spread often occurs within families, schools, nursing homes, cruise ships, in child care settings, and communities.

### INCUBATION (time from exposure to onset of symptoms)

12 to 72 hours

### CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

**Norovirus is highly contagious.** People with norovirus illness are contagious from the moment they begin feeling sick until at least 3 days after they recover. Excretion of the virus can be as long as 13 days after the onset of symptoms and prolonged excretion can occur in immunocompromised individuals.

### EXCLUSION

Child care and School: Until 48 hours after symptoms have stopped.

Everyone with vomiting and/or diarrhea should NOT use pools, swimming beaches, recreational water parks, spas, or hot tubs for at least 72 hours (3 days) after diarrhea and/or vomiting symptoms have stopped.

Staff must avoid food preparation when diarrhea and vomiting are present and for at least 3 days after diarrhea and/or vomiting have stopped.

### DIAGNOSIS

Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider if their child has symptoms to discuss whether laboratory tests need to be done to determine the cause.

### **TREATMENT**

There is no treatment. Oral rehydration may be necessary if the individual becomes dehydrated. Contact a medical professional if dehydration is suspected.

### **PREVENTION/CONTROL**

- Clean and disinfect diapering area and potty chairs after each use and bathroom toilets, sinks, and toys at least daily and when soiled. Be sure to use a **bleach-based cleaner**.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after using the toilet and changing diapers and before preparing or eating food. Staff should closely monitor handwashing of all children after children have used the bathroom or have been diapered.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not a substitute for handwashing. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers do not kill norovirus.

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/norovirus/>