

Prevent the Spread of Norovirus

Norovirus is a germ that spreads quickly and easily. It causes vomiting and diarrhea that come on suddenly. Millions of people get ill with norovirus each year. You can help protect yourself and others by washing your hands often and following simple tips to stay healthy.

Noroviruses are a group of related viruses that can cause inflammation of the stomach or intestines, also known as gastroenteritis (GAS-tro-en-ter-i-tis). This leads to cramping, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.



Norovirus Is the Most Common Cause of Gastroenteritis in the U.S.

CDC estimates that each year in the United States norovirus causes 19 to 21 million illnesses, 56,000 to 71,000 hospitalizations, and 570 to 800 deaths. Anyone can get infected with norovirus, and you can get it more than once. It is estimated that a person will get norovirus about 5 times during their lifetime. Norovirus outbreaks occur throughout the year. But, over 80% of reported outbreaks occur from November to April. Learn more about [U.S. Trends and Outbreaks](#).

Have You Ever Heard of Norovirus?



This short video (<https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/multimedia.html>) explains what norovirus is, how it spreads, and how you can protect yourself and loved ones from getting it.

Norovirus Symptoms

Common symptoms:

- diarrhea
- vomiting
- nausea
- stomach pain

Less common symptoms:

- fever
- headache
- body aches

Norovirus spreads quickly. It is found in the vomit and poop of infected people. You can get it by:

- Having direct physical contact with a person who is infected with norovirus, for example, caring for or shaking hands with an ill person and then touching your hands to your mouth
- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus
- Touching surfaces or objects with norovirus on them and then putting your hands in your mouth

People with norovirus illness are most contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill and for the first few days after they recover. Some people may be contagious for even longer.

There is currently no vaccine available to prevent norovirus infection or drug to treat sick people. Learn how to protect yourself and others by following a few simple steps.



Clean, then disinfect the entire area after someone vomits or has diarrhea.

Protect Yourself and Others from Norovirus

• **Practice proper hand hygiene**

Wash your hands carefully with soap and water, especially after using the toilet and changing diapers, and always before eating or preparing food. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. These alcohol-based products can help reduce the number of germs on your hands, but they are not a substitute for washing with soap and water.

• **Handle and prepare food safely**

Carefully rinse fruits and vegetables, and cook oysters and other shellfish thoroughly before eating. People with norovirus illness should not prepare food for others while they have symptoms and for at least 2 days after they recover from their illness. Also see [For Food Workers: Norovirus and Working with Food](#).

• **Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces**

After someone vomits or has diarrhea, put on disposable gloves to immediately clean and disinfect

contaminated surfaces using a bleach-based household cleaner as directed on the product label. If no such cleaning product is available, you can use a solution made with 5 tablespoons to 1.5 cups of household bleach per 1 gallon of water. Always clean up the entire area immediately after someone with norovirus vomits or has diarrhea . It will help keep others from getting sick from norovirus .

- **Wash laundry thoroughly**

Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with vomit or poop. Handle soiled items carefully—try not to shake them —to avoid spreading virus. If available, wear disposable gloves while handling soiled clothing or linens and wash your hands after handling. Wash soiled items with detergent at the maximum available cycle length and then machine dry.

Common Norovirus Outbreak Settings

Norovirus spreads quickly from person to person in enclosed places like nursing homes, daycare centers, schools, and cruise ships. It is also a major cause of outbreaks in restaurants and catered-meal settings if contaminated food is served or people handling food are ill.

Many Names, Same Symptoms

You may hear norovirus illness called “food poisoning” or “stomach flu.” Norovirus can cause foodborne illness, as can other germs and chemicals.

Norovirus illness is *not* related to the flu (influenza). Though they may share some of the same symptoms, the flu is a respiratory illness caused by influenza virus.

Most people with norovirus illness get better in 1 to 3 days. But it can be more serious in young children, the elderly, and people with other health conditions. It can lead to severe dehydration, hospitalization and even death. To learn more about dehydration and how to prevent and treat it see [norovirus treatment](#).

More Information

- Norovirus Infographics, Video and other Multimedia Items
- CDC Vital Signs – Preventing Norovirus Outbreaks, June 2014
- CDC Norovirus web site
- Norovirus Treatment
- Norovirus Trends and Outbreaks
- For Food Handlers: Norovirus and Working with Food
- Norovirus in Healthcare Settings , general information on norovirus and prevention in healthcare facilities
- Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives , hand- and water-related hygiene tips
- Six Tips to Help Prevent the Spread of Norovirus (<http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=8629629>) [04:09 minutes]
- Norovirus in the United States (<http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=8629866>) [08:46 minutes]
- Put Your Hands Together (<http://www2a.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=10109>) [03:48 minutes], information on how to help stop the spread of infection and stay healthy
- Foodborne Burden

- Tips for Healthy Cruising
- CDC's Vessel Sanitation Program
- Epidemiology of Foodborne Norovirus Outbreaks (http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/18/10/12-0833_article.htm), United States, 2001–2008. *Emerg Infect Dis* [Internet]. 2012 Oct

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(https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/walking/call-to-action/index.htm?s_cid=bb-dnpao-calltoaction-002).



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