

# Norovirus

## 1. What is norovirus?

Norovirus is an illness of the stomach and intestines. It is often called food poisoning or stomach flu, but it is not related to the flu (influenza). It is the most common cause of diarrhea (watery stool) and vomiting (throwing up).

## 2. How does norovirus spread?

Norovirus can spread quickly and easily from person to person, especially in close places like skilled nursing facilities, daycare centers, schools, and cruise ships. It also can spread easily from contaminated food or surfaces or from an infected person. This disease is often the cause of outbreaks in restaurants and catering.

## 3. What are the symptoms of norovirus?

The most common symptom of norovirus illness is diarrhea. Other possible symptoms can include vomiting, nausea, and stomach cramping. You may also have a low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and a general sense of tiredness. Norovirus illness often begins suddenly with symptoms lasting for 1 to 2 days.

## 4. How is norovirus treated?

There are no medicines to treat norovirus illness. When people are ill with diarrhea and vomiting, they should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration (water loss in the body) which is the most serious health effect from this illness, especially for young children, the elderly, and people with weakened immunity (such as cancer or HIV) or chronic illness (like diabetes or heart disease).

## 5. How can you prevent the spread of norovirus?

- Wash your hands really well with soap and water, especially before eating or preparing food, and after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- People who are sick with norovirus should stay home to avoid getting others sick and should not prepare food while they have symptoms (diarrhea or vomiting) and for 2 days after they recover.
- Wash fruits and vegetables, and thoroughly cook all shellfish to temperatures above 60°C/140°F.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect all surfaces, clothing or bedding as soon as possible after being soiled by diarrhea or vomit.



### Key Points:

- Norovirus is also often called food poisoning. It is the most common cause of diarrhea and vomiting.
- Norovirus spreads very easily. It is a major cause of foodborne illness outbreaks.
- Protect yourself and others:
  - ✓ Wash your hands often
  - ✓ Stay home and do not prepare food if you are ill
  - ✓ Rinse fruits and vegetables
  - ✓ Cook shellfish thoroughly
  - ✓ Clean surfaces and wash laundry if someone is ill

### For more information:

**Mendocino County**

**Environmental Health**

<http://mendocinocounty.gov/eh>

**California Department of  
Public Health**

[www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo)

**Centers for Disease Control and  
Prevention (CDC)**

[www.cdc.gov/diseasesconditions](http://www.cdc.gov/diseasesconditions)