



NOROVIRUS

What is Norovirus?

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause the “stomach flu”, or gastrointestinal (stomach or digestive) illness. Norovirus infection occurs occasionally in only one or a few people or it can be responsible for large outbreaks, such as in long-term care facilities.

Who gets Norovirus?

Norovirus infects people of all ages worldwide and anyone can become infected. There are many different strains of norovirus, which makes it difficult for a person’s body to develop long lasting immunity. Therefore, Norovirus illness can reoccur through a person’s lifetime. In addition, because of differences in genetic factors, some people are more likely to become infected and develop more severe illness than others.

How does someone get Norovirus?

Norovirus is spread from person to person via feces, but can also be spread through the air during vomiting. Good hand washing is the most important way to prevent the transmission of Norovirus. Outbreaks have been linked to sick food handlers, ill healthcare workers, cases in facilities such as nursing homes spreading to other residents, contaminated shellfish, and water contaminated with sewage.

What are the symptoms of Norovirus?

The most common symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps. Fever is usually low grade or absent. Infected people generally recover in 1-2 days and serious illness rarely occurs.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Symptoms of Norovirus illness usually begin about 24 –48 hours after ingestion of the virus.

How is Norovirus infection diagnosed?

Laboratory diagnosis can be performed in the New Hampshire Public Health Laboratories when there are multiple cases. Diagnosis is often based on the combination of symptoms and the short time of the illness.

What is the treatment for Norovirus infection?

No specific treatment is available. People who become dehydrated might need to be rehydrated by taking liquids by mouth. Occasionally, a patient may need to be hospitalized to receive intravenous fluids.

How can Norovirus be prevented?

While there is no vaccine for Norovirus, there are precautions people should take:

- ❖ Wash hands with soap and warm water after using the bathroom and changing diapers
- ❖ Wash hands with soap and warm water before preparing or eating any food
- ❖ Cook all shellfish thoroughly before eating
- ❖ Wash raw vegetables before eating
- ❖ Dispose of sewage in a sanitary manner

Who should be excluded?

Food handlers, healthcare workers and childcare workers should be excluded for 48 hours after resolution of symptoms. Children with non-specific diarrhea should be excluded until symptoms resolve.

NOROVIRUS (cont.)

Reportable?

No. Norovirus is not reportable by New Hampshire state law to the Division of Public Health Services, Communicable Disease Control Section. However, Public Health Professionals are available for consultation at (603) 271-4496 or 1-800-852-3345 ext. 4496.

For further information, refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at:

www.cdc.gov

Or the NH Department of Health & Human Services website at:

www.dhhs.state.nh.us