



Norovirus

What is norovirus?

Norovirus is a type of virus that causes gastroenteritis, with vomiting and diarrhoea.

It is highly infectious and may cause outbreaks in settings such as schools, child care centres, aged care facilities, cruise ships, restaurants and hospitals.

How do you get norovirus?

When people are infected with norovirus they shed the virus in faeces (poo) and vomit.

Infection occurs by:

- touching objects or surfaces that are contaminated with the virus, and then touching one's mouth
- consuming food or drink that is contaminated with the virus
- swallowing aerosolised particles that are dispersed in the air after an infected person has vomited.

Norovirus is easily spread from person-to-person as the virus can survive on contaminated surfaces. Many common disinfectants do not kill norovirus.

Signs and symptoms

Symptoms generally start 1 to 2 days after exposure to the virus and illness usually lasts for 1 to 3 days.

Symptoms may include:

- vomiting
- diarrhoea

- nausea
- stomach cramps
- headache
- low grade fever
- chills
- muscle aches.

How do I know I have norovirus?

There are many causes of gastroenteritis, and laboratory testing of a faecal specimen is necessary to confirm that symptoms are due to norovirus infection.

Treatment of norovirus

There is no specific treatment for norovirus.

People with confirmed or suspected norovirus infection should:

- drink plenty of fluids such as plain water or oral rehydration drinks (available from pharmacies) to avoid dehydration.
Dehydration is especially dangerous for babies and the elderly.
- avoid anti-vomiting or anti-diarrhoeal medications unless these are prescribed or recommended by a doctor.

Antibiotics are not effective for viral infections, including norovirus.

If you experience severe or prolonged symptoms you should visit a doctor.

While you have the infection

- Do not go to work or school for at least 24 hours after symptoms have finished, or 48 hours if you work in or attend a high risk setting, such as healthcare, residential care or child-care, or handle food as part of your job.
- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly after going to the toilet.



- Avoid preparing or handling food for other people until symptoms have resolved. If you must prepare or handle food, thoroughly wash your hands beforehand to reduce the risk of spreading the infection to others.
- Immediately remove and wash any clothes or bedding contaminated with vomit or diarrhoea using detergent and hot water.
- After an episode of diarrhoea or vomiting, clean contaminated surfaces (for example benches, floors and toilets) immediately using detergent and hot water. Then disinfect surfaces using a bleach-based product diluted according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Clean carpet or soft furnishings contaminated with diarrhoea or vomit immediately using detergent and hot water and then steam clean.

How can norovirus be prevented?

- Avoid contact with people who have gastroenteritis symptoms consistent with norovirus infection.
- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly after changing nappies, going to the toilet, cleaning up vomit or diarrhoea, and before eating or drinking.
- If hand-washing facilities are not available use an alcohol-based gel.

Where to get help

- See your doctor.
- Visit a GP after hours.
- Ring *healthdirect Australia* on 1800 022 222.

Remember

- Norovirus is a highly infectious form of gastroenteritis.
- Symptoms usually last 1 to 3 days.
- Many common disinfectants do not kill norovirus.

Acknowledgements Public Health

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See also

- [Gastroenteritis](#)

Related sites

- [Healthdirect Australia \(external site\)](#)

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