

## Norovirus - Fact Sheet

Information for Healthcare Workers

### What is norovirus?

A virus that can cause severe and sudden gastroenteritis (i.e., inflammation of the lining of the stomach and intestines). Both healthy and compromised persons can be affected.

### Signs and Symptoms:

Common symptoms of norovirus infection include vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramping. Less common symptoms can include low-grade fever or chills, headache, and muscle aches. Symptoms usually begin 1 or 2 days after ingesting the virus but may appear as early as 12 hours after exposure.

### Cause:

Eating food or drinking liquids contaminated by an infected person.

Eating uncooked shellfish that has been harvested from contaminated waters.

Touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching their mouth or eating without washing their hands first.

### Transmission:

Noroviruses are very contagious. They are found in the stool (feces) or vomit of infected people. From there, noroviruses are transferred to food, water, or surfaces by the hands of infected people who have not washed adequately after using the bathroom.

### Time for symptoms to develop:

Symptoms usually begin 1 or 2 days after ingesting the virus but may appear as early as 12 hours after exposure. The illness typically comes on suddenly. The infected person may feel very sick and vomit often, sometimes without warning, many times a day.

### Contagious time period:

Norovirus is most infectious from the start of symptoms until 48 hours after all symptoms have stopped. You may also be infectious for a short time before and after this. You can get norovirus more than once because the virus is always changing, and your body is unable to build up long-term resistance to it.

### Treatment:

There's no treatment for norovirus, so you have to let it run its course. You don't usually need to get medical advice unless there's a risk of a more serious problem. To help ease your symptoms drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.

### Work restrictions:

- **Exposed** if exposed and you have no symptoms you can work but ensure you wash your hands frequently
- **Symptomatic** Staff who develop symptoms consistent with a GI Infection (e.g. vomiting, diarrhea) while at home, work or in the community must remain off work until at least 48 hours after symptoms resolve, even if feeling better.

### Prevention:

There is no vaccine or medication to prevent or treat norovirus, prevention is up to you! Always perform appropriate hand hygiene, particularly after contact with fecal material or after contact with anyone suspected or confirmed with norovirus. Wear gloves when caring for symptomatic patients. Avoid touching your face, clean contaminated surfaces, wash your produce and wash contaminated laundry. Avoid contact with others during illness as much as possible.