

Getting to know: Norovirus



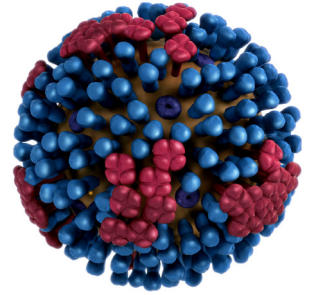
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What is it?

Norovirus, also known as the “Winter Vomiting Bug” is a virus that is the main cause of gastroenteritis. This wide-spread bug can be very unpleasant, but usually goes away in about 2 days.

Confirmed Norovirus Case

A person (or staff member) who, within a 24-hour period has, 3 or more episodes of non-bloody diarrhoea, AND/OR, 2 or more episodes of vomiting, without having any other obvious cause.



How do we get it?

- Direct Contact: Norovirus is spread through the ingestion of contaminated food or water.
- Non-Direct Contact: It can also be spread by touching contaminated surfaces or equipment and then hands touching your mouth.
- Droplet transmission: A person with excessive vomiting can spread large quantities of virus in droplets which can contaminate surfaces. These droplets can remain in the air, travel over a distance and still be infectious. The spread of norovirus can then occur when others inhale and then swallow these droplets.

Noroviruses can survive on surfaces for up to 7days.

Symptoms

Onset of symptoms will occur between 12 and 48 hours of contamination and can last anywhere between 12 and 60 hours.

Symptoms include: sudden onset of nausea followed by projectile vomiting and watery diarrhoea. Headaches, muscle aches, and raised temperature are also characteristics of Norovirus.



Treatment

There's no specific treatment or medicine to cure norovirus, you need to let it run its course. Norovirus infection cannot be treated with antibiotics because it is not a bacterial infection. Do not take any bowel medications when suffering from Norovirus. You can increase fluids to prevent dehydration.

Sufferers are encouraged to stay at home for 48 hours after their symptoms have stopped to stop the spread of Norovirus.

How to stop the spread of Norovirus

- Good hand hygiene – washing your hands with soap and water is most effective
- Wearing aprons to reduce the spread of particles
- Disinfect contaminated areas and surfaces regularly
- Stay at home for 48 hours after symptoms have stopped if you catch Norovirus.

What is an “Outbreak”?

An Outbreak is when there are two or more residents with active cases, within two days of each other, that are not related to any other possible cause. Each resident must experience 3 or more episodes of non-bloody diarrhoea to be classed as Norovirus.

What should RMR staff do when there is an outbreak of Norovirus in a setting they work in?

- Contact RMR immediately so that we can look at booked staff over the next few shifts
- Liaise with the home to restrict movement between units/floors
- Liaise with the home to possibly work in a unit unaffected by Norovirus
- Wear PPE – Wash hands before and after all patient contact, wear gloves and aprons as appropriate
- Dispose of any foods opened to contamination
- Clean & disinfect all frequently touched surfaces (handrails, drug trolley, door handles)
- Staff are advised not to work in other care homes for 48hours after working in a care home with an active Outbreak.

