



Marion County

OREGON

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Norovirus Fact Sheet

What is Norovirus?

Norovirus or Norwalk-like viruses cause illness which includes vomiting and/or diarrhea (gastroenteritis). During an outbreak, this illness can lead to staff missing work, increased demands on nursing staff due to many ill residents and staff, visiting restrictions, and other problems.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms often begin 24-48 hours after being exposed, but can occur before then.

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal Cramps
- Possibly headache, low-grade fever, and chills

How is Norovirus diagnosed and treated?

Testing for Norovirus can only be done at the Oregon State Public Health Lab through your local health department. It is diagnosed by looking at symptoms (vomiting and diarrhea) and the time they start. There is no medicine for Norovirus, but patients need to be watched for dehydration and fluid imbalances. People do not build good defenses against Norovirus, so it is possible to get it again if exposed at a later time.

How is it spread?

Ill people can spread Norovirus to others while they have vomiting and diarrhea and may spread the disease for as long as 48 hours after symptoms leave. Vomit and diarrhea of ill people are very infectious. This makes proper cleanup and keeping ill people from well people very important.

Who can get it?

Anyone who has not been recently infected can get Norovirus, but the elderly are at increased risk of becoming very ill and possibly dying.

How do you keep it from spreading?

- Frequent and thorough hand washing, especially after going to the bathroom, as well as before and after patient care, and before handling food.
- Keep ill employees home for 48 hours after vomiting and diarrhea stop
- Proper food storage and preparation
- Clean contaminated surfaces with a bleach solution (5 Tablespoons of 6% household bleach to one gallon of water)
- Prompt washing of soiled linens and clothing
- Only allow visitors who are not sick

Who to call?

If you think you may have an outbreak of Norovirus, tell the Nursing Supervisor at your facility, then call Marion County Health Department at (503) 588-5621.

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