

Facts about Norovirus

Norovirus is a virus that causes vomiting and diarrhea in all ages. Outbreaks are common in child care centres and schools.

After someone is exposed to norovirus, it takes a day or two for the signs to appear. The child may have an upset stomach and start vomiting, often followed by diarrhea. Other signs include cramping, chills or mild fever. The illness usually begins suddenly and lasts for one to three days. Complications and severe illness are rare.

It is important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. There is no medicine to treat norovirus. People get better on their own within a few days.

How is Norovirus Spread?

Norovirus can be spread if people with the virus do not wash their hands after going to the toilet or if someone with the illness handles food and drinks and has not washed their hands.

Norovirus can be spread to the environment, including sink, taps, counters and toys. People can become ill when they touch these surfaces and put their hands in their mouths.

The virus is found in the vomit and diarrhea of people who are sick. When a child vomits or has diarrhea, those nearby may be exposed to the virus through tiny droplets in the air.

The key to prevent or stop norovirus from spreading is frequent hand washing and cleaning of the environment



Signs of Dehydration

- decreased urination (fewer than 4 wet diapers in 24 hours)
- increased thirst
- no tears
- dry skin, mouth and tongue
- fast heart beat
- sunken eyes
- greyish skin
- sunken soft spot on baby's head



What to Do at the Child Care Centre or School

- If a child is sick while at the centre or school, place the child in a separate room or away from other children.
- If three or more people are ill with vomiting or diarrhea within a short time, report this to your local Community Health Centre.
- If you have to clean up vomit or diarrhea refer to the Guidelines for Cleaning Spills of Blood and Body Fluids on page 14.



What to Do at Home

- If another child at the centre or school has diarrhea or vomiting, watch your child for signs of illness.
- If your child becomes ill and is vomiting or has diarrhea, offer your child plenty of fluids to drink.
- Wash your hands and your child's hands well using soap and warm water after using the toilet, after diaper changes and cleaning up after your child.
- Watch your child for signs of dehydration.



When to Call Your Doctor or 811

Call your doctor right away if you think your child may be dehydrated or has any other signs of illness that concern you.



Children and staff who are sick with vomiting and diarrhea should stay at home until 2 days after their symptoms go away. Even when diarrhea and vomiting have stopped, the virus can still be in the bowel movements.

For more suggestions on "What to Do at Home", see: Facts About Diarrhea, page 20 and Facts About Vomiting, page 22.