



Tarrant County Public Health

A healthier community through leadership in health strategy

The Facts About Norovirus

What is norovirus?

Norovirus is a very contagious virus. You can get norovirus from an infected person, contaminated food or water, or by touching contaminated surfaces. The virus causes your stomach or intestines to get inflamed (acute gastroenteritis). This leads you to have stomach pain, nausea, diarrhea and vomiting.

Who is most at risk for norovirus?

Anyone can be infected with norovirus and get sick. Also, you can have norovirus illness many times in your life. Norovirus illness can be serious, especially for young children and older adults.

How is norovirus spread?

Norovirus is a highly contagious virus that spreads quickly in closed places like daycare centers, nursing homes, schools and cruise ships. You can become infected with norovirus by accidentally eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus, touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus then putting your fingers in your mouth. You may also become infected by having contact with someone who is infected with norovirus (for example, caring for or sharing food or eating utensils with someone with norovirus illness.)

What are the symptoms of norovirus?

The most common symptoms include diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain and nausea. Other symptoms include fever, headache and body aches. If you have norovirus illness, you can feel extremely ill and vomit, or have diarrhea many times a day. This can lead to dehydration, especially in young children, older adults and people with other illnesses. Most people with norovirus illness get better within one to three days.

How do I keep from getting norovirus?

Patients are most contagious when they are sick with norovirus illness and the first few days after they recover from the illness. Wash your hands carefully with soap and water, especially after using the toilet and changing diapers. Be sure to do the same before eating, preparing or handling food. Wash fruits and vegetables and cook seafood thoroughly. When you are sick, do not prepare food or care for others who are sick. Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces with a chlorine bleach solution. Wash laundry thoroughly.

How serious is the virus?

There is no specific medicine to treat people with norovirus illness. Norovirus infection cannot be treated with antibiotics because it is a viral (not a bacterial) infection. If you have norovirus illness, you should drink plenty of liquids to replace fluid lost from vomiting and diarrhea. Oral rehydration fluids that you can get over the counter are most helpful for mild dehydration. Severe dehydration may require hospitalization and can include a treatment of fluids given through your vein. Call the doctor if you or someone you are caring for is severely dehydrated.

For more information, call 817-321-4700 or visit <http://health.tarrantcounty.com>

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