

FACTS ABOUT NOROVIRUS

Norovirus is widely known for causing outbreaks of illness among large numbers of people. Since norovirus was first identified in 1968 at a school in Norwalk, Ohio, it has increasingly been traced to restaurants, catered meals, cruise ships, hotels, nursing homes, schools and camps. It is estimated that as many as half of all food-related outbreaks of illness may be caused by norovirus.

SYMPTOMS OF NOROVIRUS

Norovirus causes gastroenteritis, which is an inflammation of the stomach and intestines. Symptoms include:

- ▲ Nausea
- ▲ Vomiting
- ▲ Diarrhea
- ▲ Stomach cramping

People can feel very ill, and may vomit violently many times a day. Other symptoms may include a low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches and a general feeling of tiredness.

Symptoms usually begin 24 to 48 hours after ingestion of the virus, but they can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure. There is no treatment for norovirus. Most people feel better after one to two days.

HOW PEOPLE BECOME INFECTED WITH NOROVIRUS

Norovirus is extremely contagious and can spread easily from person to person. The virus is very small, and just a few particles can make a person sick.

Norovirus is found in the stool or vomit of infected people. People can become infected with the virus in several ways, including:

- ▲ Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated (contamination can be caused by a sick food handler, contact with a contaminated surface, or at the source - such as oysters harvested from contaminated waters)
- ▲ Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus, then touching their mouths
- ▲ Having direct contact with a person who is infected and is showing symptoms

People who are infected with norovirus are contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill to at least three days after recovery. Some people may be contagious for as long as two weeks after they recover.