



SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY

Environmental Health Testing | Forensic Chemistry | Medical Microbiology

Diseases Fact Sheet - Norovirus

South Dakota Department of Health

Office of Disease Prevention Services - 605-773-3737 -(1-800-592-1861 in South Dakota only)

This material is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical care. We are not able to answer personal medical questions. Please see your health care provider concerning appropriate care, treatment or other medical advice.

What is it?

Norovirus is a very contagious illness that anyone can catch and experience vomiting and diarrhea.

Symptoms usually appear within approximately 2 days of exposure to the virus and can appear suddenly. Someone who contracts [norovirus](#) may think they have a stomach bug. Norovirus is a common virus that is not related to the flu and is one of the most common causes of vomiting and diarrhea. Most people recover from illness within a couple of days and typically do not need medical attention. However, symptoms may cause missed work or school.

Common Symptoms:

- diarrhea
- nausea
- stomach pain
- vomiting

Other Symptoms:

- body aches
- fever
- headache

How does norovirus spread?

Norovirus is [highly contagious](#). People can get norovirus through food and water, which is easily contaminated. Outbreaks have been linked to commercially distributed oysters and shellfish, as well as ill food handlers.



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The virus is also transmitted through contact with sick people and contaminated surfaces. Healthcare settings, daycares, restaurants, and cruise ships are all places where norovirus can spread easily.

Common surfaces that may be contaminated with norovirus:

- Light switches
- Door handles
- Toilet seats/handles
- Faucets

What are ways to prevent contracting norovirus?

The best ways to prevent norovirus are by practicing proper hand washing and preparing food safely. If someone has norovirus, washing laundry thoroughly after any incidents and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces is crucial to preventing the spread.

Those who are sick should not prepare food or care for others. Wait at least 48 hours after symptoms resolve before preparing food for others, and practice thorough handwashing during and after experiencing symptoms.

Always wash your hands:

- After using the bathroom
- Before preparing or eating food
- After caring for someone with vomiting or diarrhea
- After cleaning up after someone who is ill

Are there treatment options for norovirus?

Most people recover on their own from infection. Drink plenty of liquids to replace any liquids lost from vomiting and diarrhea. If someone with norovirus shows signs of severe dehydration, they may need to be hospitalized.