

## Norovirus

Norovirus is a major cause of outbreaks of gastroenteritis in children and adults. These viruses have caused outbreaks in nursing homes, hospitals, schools, day care centres, businesses, and food premises.

### Symptoms

Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, headache, chills, sore muscles, and a low-grade fever. While vomiting appears to be the main symptom in children, diarrhea is the main symptom in adults.

### Norovirus illness is spread in a number of different ways.

People can become infected with the virus by touching surfaces or subjects contaminated with Norovirus and then placing their hand in their mouth (e.g., poor hand washing after using the washroom). The virus can be transmitted through the air from infected articles such as clothing and bed linens. Ill people spread the virus through vomiting and coughing.

Shellfish (raw oysters) harvested from polluted waters, fruits and vegetables irrigated with contaminated water from streams and rivers, and ill food handlers preparing foods that do not require cooking (sandwiches) have caused outbreaks.

From the time a person is infected to the time they become ill can average between 18 to 48 hours. Symptoms can last anywhere from 12 hours to 60 hours. If the symptoms last more than 72 hours, call your physician.

An individual who no longer has the symptoms may still be carrying the virus. Food handlers and health care professionals should remain home for 48 hours after symptoms have stopped.

There is no treatment, other than making sure ill people do not get dehydrated. It is important to drink small, frequent amounts of clear fluids like water, broth, apple juice, or tea. Limit or stop eating or drinking dairy products until the diarrhea has stopped. Eat soft foods like macaroni and rice dishes.

### Preventive measures

- Wash your hands before you eat and after going to the washroom.
- Wash fruits and vegetables under warm, running water.
- Shellfish such as clams and oysters need to be well cooked.
- If you or your children are ill, stay at home, until 48 hours after symptoms have resolved.

For more information call KFL&A Public Health at 613-549-1232.

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