

NOROVIRUS (Norwalk-like Viruses)

Noroviruses cause gastroenteritis, an inflammation of the stomach and small and large intestines. Norovirus is often incorrectly called the “stomach flu”, although it is not caused by the influenza virus.

CAUSE Norovirus (previously known as calicivirus, Norwalk virus, or Norwalk-like virus).

SYMPTOMS Watery diarrhea and vomiting. In addition, fever, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, and stomach cramps can occur. The illness can be mild to moderately severe with symptoms usually lasting 24 to 48 hours.

SPREAD The viruses leave the body through the stool of an infected person and enter another person when hands, food, or objects (such as toys) contaminated with stool are placed in the mouth. Spread can occur when people do not wash their hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. People can also get sick by eating food items contaminated during preparation or serving. Aerosolized spread from vomiting is possible. Person-to-person spread often occurs within families, schools, nursing homes, cruise ships, in childcare settings, and communities.

INCUBATION It takes 10 to 50 hours, usually from 24 to 48 hours, from the time a person is exposed until symptoms develop.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD While the symptoms are present and up to 72 hours after vomiting and/or diarrhea has stopped.

EXCLUSION Childcare and School: Until diarrhea and vomiting have stopped.

Everyone with vomiting and/or diarrhea should NOT use pools, swimming beaches, recreational water parks, spas, or hot tubs for at least 72 hours (3 days) after diarrhea and/or vomiting symptoms have stopped.

Staff must avoid food preparation when diarrhea and vomiting are present and for at least 3 days after diarrhea and/or vomiting have stopped. Please call your local health department to see if these restrictions apply.

DIAGNOSIS Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider if their child has symptoms to discuss whether laboratory tests need to be done to determine the cause.

TREATMENT Vomiting and diarrhea may lead to dehydration, which may be a medical emergency. Ask a healthcare provider how to prevent dehydration.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after using the toilet and changing diapers and before preparing or eating food. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.** Staff should closely monitor handwashing of all children after children have used the bathroom or have been diapered.

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PREVENTION/CONTROL (CONTINUED)

- Clean and disinfect diapering area and potty chairs after each use and bathroom toilets, sinks, and toys at least daily and when soiled. (See pgs 34-36.)
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled. (See pgs 34-36.)

For more information, call your school nurse.