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SPREAD OF NOROVIRUS INFECTIONS: “Stomach Bug”

Norovirus is the most common cause of acute viral gastroenteritis as well as foodborne-disease outbreaks in the United States. Each year in the U.S. norovirus infections results in about 21 million illnesses and contributes to about 70,000 hospitalizations and 800 deaths. (Source CDC)

A new strain of norovirus (known as Sydney 2012/ GII.4 Sydney), first detected in Australia in 2012, is rapidly spreading around the world. This new strain is now the leading cause of norovirus outbreaks in the U.S. and cases have been documented in New Zealand, **Japan**, France, and Great Britain. Globally, surveillance systems showed an increase in norovirus activity in late 2012 and this increased activity has been associated with the emergence of this new strain.

Norovirus can spread quickly and cause outbreaks in closed places like daycare centers, nursing homes, schools, cruise ships etc.

The virus causes the stomach or intestines or both to get inflamed and this leads to stomach pain, nausea, diarrhea and vomiting. These symptoms can be serious for some people, especially young children and older adults.

Norovirus is a **very contagious virus** and anyone can get infected with this virus and get sick. Also, one can have norovirus illness many times in their life.

The emergence of a new strain does not mean that it causes more serious illness but, like other norovirus strains, it can cause violent and projectile vomiting, diarrhea and sometimes fevers, headaches and stomach cramps. Symptoms due to norovirus infection generally last just a few days.

The most common symptoms—

- diarrhea
- throwing up
- nausea
- stomach pain

Other symptoms—

- fever
- headache
- body aches

If you have norovirus illness, you can feel extremely ill and throw up or have diarrhea many times a day

Mode of Transmission:

- **You can get the virus from an infected person, contaminated food or water, or by touching contaminated surfaces.**
- You can become infected with norovirus by accidentally getting stool or vomit from infected people in your mouth. This usually happens by
 - **eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus,**
 - **touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus then putting your fingers in your mouth, or**
 - **having contact with someone who is infected with norovirus (for example, caring for or sharing food or eating utensils with someone with norovirus illness).**

Treatment:

- *There is no vaccine to prevent norovirus infection,*
- ***There is no specific medicine to treat people with norovirus illness, but during the course of the illness patients should try to stay well hydrated by drinking generous amounts of fluids;***

Prevent Dehydration

Drink plenty of liquids to replace fluids that are lost from throwing up and diarrhea.

Sports drinks and other drinks without caffeine or alcohol can help with mild dehydration. But, these drinks may not replace important nutrients and minerals. Oral rehydration fluids that you can get over the counter are most helpful for mild dehydration.

If you think you or someone you are caring for is severely dehydrated, call a doctor.

Prevention:

- ***The best way to help prevent norovirus is to practice proper hand washing and general cleanliness.***
 - *Wash hands often*
- ***Rinse fruits and vegetables***
- ***Cook shell fish thoroughly (Noroviruses can survive temperatures as high as 140°F and quick steaming processes that are often used for cooking shellfish)***
- ***Clean surfaces & wash laundry thoroughly***
- ***When you are sick, do not prepare food or care for others***

General Cleanliness Measures:

- Wash fruits and vegetables and cook seafood thoroughly
- Carefully wash fruits and vegetables before preparing and eating them. Cook oysters and other shellfish thoroughly before eating them.

- Be aware that noroviruses are relatively resistant. They can survive temperatures as high as 140°F and quick steaming processes that are often used for cooking shellfish.
- Food that might be contaminated with norovirus should be thrown out.
- Keep sick infants and children out of areas where food is being handled and prepared.

When you are sick, do not prepare food or care for others who are sick

You should not prepare food for others or provide healthcare while you are sick and for at least 2 to 3 days after you recover. This also applies to sick workers in settings such as schools and daycares where they may expose people to norovirus.

Many local and state health departments require that food handlers and preparers with norovirus illness not work until at least 2 to 3 days after they recover. If you were recently sick, you can be given different duties in the restaurant, such as working at a cash register or hosting.

Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces

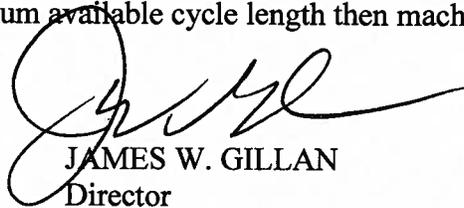
After throwing up or having diarrhea, immediately clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces. Use a chlorine bleach solution with a concentration of 1000–5000 ppm (5–25 tablespoons of household bleach [5.25%] per gallon of water) or other disinfectant registered as effective against norovirus by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Wash laundry thoroughly

Immediately remove and wash clothes or linens that may be contaminated with vomit or stool (feces).

You should

- handle soiled items carefully without agitating them,
- wear rubber or disposable gloves while handling soiled items and wash your hands after, and
- wash the items with detergent at the maximum available cycle length then machine dry them.



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