

Norovirus (Norwalk-like virus) Information Sheet

FOR HOSPITAL STAFF:

What is Norovirus?



Norovirus causes a viral gastrointestinal illness, generally lasting 1-2 days, characterized by vomiting and/or diarrhea. Fever and stomach cramps may be present. Norovirus infection is often referred to as the “stomach flu”, and is **HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS**. This virus is spread via the fecal-oral route, either directly from one person to another or indirectly from environmental contamination.

How can I prevent the in-hospital transmission of Norovirus?

- Do not consume food in patient care areas
- Do not consume food from “shared access” containers i.e. holiday cookies/chocolates in open boxes, which may be touched by several people
- Increase the frequency of hand washing, and wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 15 seconds. Do not wash hands in patients’ sinks. If hand-washing sinks are not available, use an alcohol-based hand disinfectant
- Wash hands thoroughly after using the washroom and before preparing or eating food
- Discourage patient visitors from coming to the hospital where an outbreak of Norovirus is occurring
- Ask patient visitors to not come to the hospital if they are ill with a possible infection.
- Patients suspected of having Norovirus should be on contact precautions (single room, gowns, gloves)
- Follow your hospital’s infectious diseases/infection control protocols and clean up vomit and/or stool quickly; use a fresh gown, and gloves each time you enter the room of a patient who has diarrhea or is vomiting
- Clean contaminated surfaces with an agent effective against viruses (e.g. household bleach 1:10 dilution, activated hydrogen peroxide)
- Heighten environmental hygiene: patient care areas must be thoroughly and regularly cleaned - viruses may last up to 12 days on some surfaces!
- Increase frequency of cleaning of staff washrooms
- Units discharging patients from an area affected by Norovirus must inform the receiving unit or facility that the patient may have been exposed to this illness.



What do I do if I become sick?

- Notify your hospital’s Occupational Health Department immediately in order to receive assistance with your course of illness and treatment of symptoms
 - > Symptoms generally resolve in 1-2 days; do not return to work until 48 hours after the disappearance of symptoms! You are still infectious for this period of time
 - > Stool sample testing is not indicated for uncomplicated cases
 - > Get bed rest and drink plenty of fluids; severely dehydrated persons, or those with severe/protracted symptoms should seek medical help.