

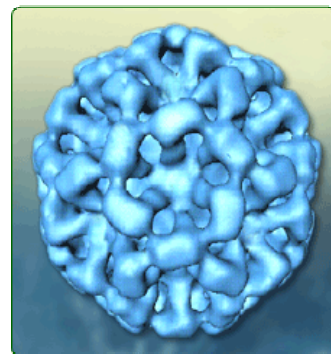
# NOROVIRUS FACT SHEET FOR STAFF

## ***What is the Norovirus?***

It is a small structured RNA virus causing gastrointestinal illness. It is NOT THE FLU! Flu (InFLUenza) is fever, cough, aches, pains and malaise and typically lasts 3-5 days.

Norwalk disease and Norwalk-like illnesses causes symptoms such as profuse diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea and/or vomiting and typically lasts for about 24-48 hours. The virus can survive on surfaces, such as countertops or sink taps, for a long time. An asymptomatic individual may incubate the virus and spread it to others for up to 24 hours before symptoms develop. They may still be contagious for up to 48 hours after symptoms have abated.

Norwalk and Norwalk-like illnesses may also be called "winter vomiting disease", as they tend to occur during colder weather when people spend more time inside. There are a number of other viruses and bacteria that can cause diarrheal illnesses. Culture and sensitivity lab work will help rule out other causes such as *C. difficile*, ova and parasites, etc. Norwalk and Norwalk-like illnesses may also occur in non-health care environment settings such as cruise ships, day care centers.



## ***What are the signs and symptoms of Norovirus?***

A sudden onset of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea (no blood), abdominal cramps, headache and occasionally a low-grade fever {vomiting and diarrhea can be explosive}. However the virus can show milder symptoms in individuals as well as there are different strains of Norovirus.

## ***How is it transmitted?***

- Person to person by fecal/oral route
- Via droplets contaminated with fecal material or vomit, i.e. flushing bedpans
- Contaminated articles, i.e. linens to hands if not washed before food preparation
- Contaminated surfaces such as countertops, door knobs and water taps

***How long do symptoms of Norovirus last?*** Usually, not more than 24-48 hours.

## ***How is Norovirus treated?***

Treatment is usually not required unless dehydration is present in which case oral or IV fluid replacement would be required.

## ***What type of precautions should I use?***

**Contact precautions:** Refer to precautions as outlined in the infection prevention and control manual which should be available where you work. As Norwalk can be transmitted via aerosolized droplets, the use of a surgical mask (Droplet precautions) for persons who are within 3-4 feet of a person experiencing active vomiting or diarrhea may help to prevent the spread of this disease.

## ***When can precautions be discontinued?***

Usually 48 hours after symptoms have ceased. However, in outbreak situations, discontinuation of precautions will be determined by the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) or designate, along with the outbreak management team.

## ***What can I do to prevent getting this disease?***

Frequent hand hygiene with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitizers (with 60% to 90% alcohol content) is the best way to prevent the spread of this and other infections. Hand hygiene should occur before eating, drinking, and smoking to decrease your risk of ingesting this organism. Sharing communal snacks with others can also spread this disease. All foods consumed by staff should be consumed only in staff areas - not at communal work areas such as nursing stations.

## ***What disinfecting solution should be used for cleaning and sanitizing?***

Household cleaners other than bleach are not effective. Surfaces should be wiped down with a dilute bleach solution (at least 1 part household bleach to 9 parts water) to kill the virus. Bathrooms and toilet areas need special care. They should be cleaned often with the dilute bleach solution. Wear disposable gloves.

