Public Health
Seattle & King County

Norovirus or Noro-like Illness

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We are providing you with this fact sheet:

- ☐ **Because you or your child may have been exposed to norovirus.**
- ☐ **For informational purposes only.**

General Information About Norovirus

What is norovirus?

- Norovirus is a virus that infects the stomach and intestines.
- Sometimes people call it a “stomach bug” or “food poisoning.”
- It spreads very easily. There are billions of virus particles in the vomit and diarrhea of a person with norovirus. It only takes a few virus particles to make another person sick.

Who can get it?

- Anyone can get Norovirus.
- It is more common during cooler months (late fall or early spring).

What are the symptoms?

- Vomiting that starts suddenly.
- Watery, non-bloody, diarrhea
- Stomach pain and cramping
- Fever (American Academy of Pediatrics defines fever as a temperature of 100.4ºF [38ºC] or higher).
- Chills
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Most people get better within 1 to 3 days, but young children might have symptoms for up to 6 days.
- Some people may have the virus and can spread it even if they do not have symptoms.

How is it spread?

- Norovirus is found in vomit and diarrhea.
- The virus spreads very easily.
- It spreads when someone:
    - Eats food or drinks liquids that have norovirus in them.
    - Touches surfaces or objects with norovirus on them and then puts their hands into their mouth.
    - Shares utensils or cups with someone who has norovirus.
- People are most likely to spread norovirus from the time symptoms start until a few days after they feel better.

Public Health
Seattle & King County

How Do I Know If My Child Has Norovirus?

A healthcare provider can diagnose norovirus, usually based on a person's symptoms.

If you have additional questions or are concerned your child has norovirus, contact your healthcare provider. This fact sheet provides general information only.

What If My Child Has Norovirus?

Notify your child care provider or preschool immediately if your child has norovirus.

How is it treated?

- There is not a specific medication for norovirus, but you can treat some of the symptoms to feel more comfortable.
- Keep children comfortable, allow them to rest, make sure they drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration, and check on them often.
- Infants 3 months or younger with a fever of 100.4ºF (38ºC) or higher should be seen by their healthcare provider.
- Talk with your child's healthcare provider if you have any concerns about your child's symptoms. **If your child is showing signs of dehydration (fewer wet diapers or less urine than usual, more tired than normal, dizziness, dry tongue or lips, fewer tears), they need to be seen by a healthcare provider immediately.**

What can I do to help prevent Norovirus from spreading?

- **Wash hands often**, especially after using the toilet, changing diapers, helping children use the toilet, and cleaning up vomit or diarrhea.
    - The virus is easily removed from the hands with soap and water.
    - **Hand sanitizer is not effective against norovirus**.
- Before preparing, serving, or eating food:
    - Wash surfaces used for food preparation.
    - Wash hands.
    - Wash all raw fruits and vegetables.
    - Cook shellfish to at least 145ºF (62.7ºC).
    - **People who are sick should not prepare food for others.**
- Avoid sharing cups, eating utensils, food, and drinks with anyone who has norovirus.
- Immediately remove clothing or bedding with diarrhea or vomit on them. Wash these items using a hot water cycle and dry on the hottest setting.
- Clean and disinfect household surfaces and toys. Carefully follow the disinfectant product instructions. After disinfecting, rinse surfaces or objects that are used for food or may be put into the mouth (for example, toys).
- If possible, flush or discard any vomit and diarrhea down the toilet.

This document was last reviewed by the Child Care Health Program 6.2026

Public Health
Seattle & King County

Does My Child Need to Stay Home from Child Care?

Children who have been **exposed** to norovirus can continue to attend child care if they do not have symptoms.

Children who **have any of the following symptoms need to stay home:**

- Diarrhea 2 or more times in 24 hours.
- Stool (poop) that leaks out of a diaper or is causing toilet-trained children to not make it to the toilet on time.
- Any blood or mucus in the diarrhea.
- Vomit 2 or more times in 24 hours.
- A fever (temperature of 100.4ºF [38ºC] or higher) along with the other norovirus symptoms above.
- Signs of dehydration, including fewer wet diapers or less urine than usual, more tired than normal, dizziness, dry tongue or lips, fewer tears. They should see a healthcare provider if they have these symptoms.
- Do not feel well enough to participate in classroom activities (for example: unusually tired; cranky or fussy; or crying more than normal).

Please note, if there is an outbreak of norovirus at your child care program, the local health department may require children be excluded after one episode of vomiting or diarrhea to help control the spread of the virus.

Please follow your child care program's sickness policy and local health department guidance.

References

American Academy of Pediatrics

- Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, 6th Edition. Pages 151-152

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

- Norovirus http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/

This document was last reviewed by the Child Care Health Program 6.2026