



Infection Prevention Control (IPC) Topic: Norovirus

Intro: Norovirus is a highly infectious virus that causes vomiting and diarrhea.¹ Norovirus is typically spread through contact with contaminated surfaces and fecal oral route. Norovirus is the leading cause of foodborne illness in the United States.⁴ The most common symptoms of norovirus are nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach pain.¹

What is the risk?³ Germs can live on all types of surfaces and equipment. Germs from the gut travel easily in stool, and they're often found in the environment, like on surfaces in bathrooms.³ Touch is a major pathway of spread for these germs because healthcare workers utilize their hands so much throughout the day.³ Proper hand hygiene, cleaning/disinfecting high touch surfaces, proper food handling, and laundering clothes correctly help stop the spread.

Highlights:

- How Norovirus travels¹
 - Contact:
 - Example: touching another infected person, or object.
- Different ways norovirus spreads²:

Contaminated food

- A person with norovirus touches food with their bare hands.
- Food is placed on a counter or surface that has poop or vomit particles on it.
- Tiny drops of vomit from a person with norovirus spray through the air and land on the food.
- Food is grown with contaminated water, such as oysters, or fruit and vegetables are watered with contaminated water in the field.

Dirty recreational or drinking Water

- At the source such as when a septic tank leaks into a well.
 - When a person with norovirus vomits or poops in the water.
 - When water isn't treated properly, such as with not enough chlorine.

Sick people and contaminated surfaces.

- A person with norovirus touches surfaces with their bare hands.
- Food, water, or objects that are contaminated with norovirus are placed on surfaces.
- Tiny drops of vomit from a person with norovirus spray through the air, landing on surfaces or entering another person's mouth.
- A person with norovirus has diarrhea that splatters onto surfaces.

- The steps you can take to prevent Norovirus^{5,2,8,9,11}

- Handwashing

- Wash with soap and water for 20 seconds at least, and especially at these times:
 - After using the toilet or changing diapers.
 - Before eating, preparing, or handling food.
 - Before giving yourself or someone else medicine.
 - **It is important to continue washing your hands often even after you feel better.** Norovirus can be found in your vomiting or feces (poop) even before you start feeling sick. The virus can also stay in your poop for two weeks or more after you feel better and you can still spread norovirus during that time.
 - **Hand sanitizer does not work well against norovirus.** You can use hand sanitizers in addition to hand washing, but hand sanitizers are not a substitute for handwashing, which is best.

- Handle and prepare food safely.

- Wash fruits and vegetables well.
- Cook shellfish thoroughly to an internal temperature of at least 145°F.
- Routinely clean and sanitize kitchen utensils, counters, and surfaces.

- Clean and disinfect surfaces¹¹.

- After someone vomits or has diarrhea, always thoroughly clean then disinfect the entire area immediately.
 - Put on rubber or disposable gloves, and wipe the entire area with paper towels, soap, and hot water.

- Properly disinfect with an EPA registered cleaner and follow proper contact or wet time.
 - Lastly, clean the entire area again with soap and hot water.
 - After cleaning and disinfecting, remove gloves and clean hands
- Wash laundry well
 - Handle items carefully without shaking them, limiting particles going into the air.
 - Wash the items with detergent and hot water at the maximum available cycle length and then machine dry them at the highest heat setting.
 - Wash your hands with soap and water.

Summary: Germs like to hide in contaminated food and water, unwashed hands, dirty surfaces, and contaminated linens. When you recognize the risk for Norovirus spreading, you can take actions to stop the spread. Prevention starts with cleaning hands, properly cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, handling food properly, and properly laundering clothes and linens.

For more information on recognizing risk for Norovirus and related Project Firstline materials, see References below:

- 1.) <https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/>
- 2.) <https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/about/transmission.html>
- 3.) <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/pdf/projectfirstline/ReservoirsTK-S1-Plan-508.pdf>
- 4.) <https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/burden.html>
- 5.) <https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/about/prevention.html>
- 6.) Germs live in water and on wet surfaces. Project Firstline. CDC.
<https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/pdf/projectfirstline/Healthcare-Germs-Environment-WaterAndWetSurfaces-508.pdf>
- 7.) [Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings | CDC](#)
- 8.) <https://www.foodsafety.gov/>
- 9.) <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety>
- 10.) <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/pdf/projectfirstline/Healthcare-Germs-Body-Skin-508.pdf>
- 11.) [Clean Up After Someone with Norovirus Vomits or has Diarrhea - YouTube](#)

