



# Yamhill County Fact Sheet

## News you can use

### Norovirus

#### What is norovirus?

Noroviruses are a group of highly contagious viruses that cause vomiting and diarrhea, in humans. Recovery is usually complete with no serious long-term health effects. Over half of all disease outbreaks investigated in Oregon are caused by norovirus.

#### What are the symptoms of illness caused by norovirus?

Symptoms usually begin 30-36 hours after exposure to norovirus but can occur earlier.

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal cramps
- Possibly headache, low grade fever, chills, or muscle aches

These symptoms occur in all age groups although diarrhea is more common among adults and vomiting is more common in children.

**State law prohibits working in food preparation or care facilities while symptomatic, and recommends waiting at least 24 hours after symptoms are completely gone.**

#### How is norovirus spread?

Norovirus must be swallowed to cause infection. Once it is swallowed it is then passed on in the stool and vomit of infected people. People can become infected by:

- Eating or drinking food or liquids that are contaminated by the feces or vomit of an infected person.
- Touching a contaminated surface, and then touching their mouth before hand washing.
- Having direct contact with an infected person, and then touching their mouth before hand washing.

The virus can survive on contaminated surfaces for up to 24 hours. People can become contagious shortly before they start to feel ill, and can remain infectious for days after symptoms are gone.

It is especially important that if you are taking care of someone who is sick or a young child, to constantly wash your hands. Especially after cleaning up vomit or diarrhea, or after changing a diaper.

#### How is norovirus diagnosed and treated?

A clinical diagnosis is made based on the combination and timing of symptoms (vomiting and diarrhea). Stool samples can be tested to confirm a diagnosis, although this often is not done.

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No specific treatment is available other than letting the illness run its course. It is important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. One of the main symptoms of norovirus is diarrhea. Use of anti-diarrhea medications is not appropriate for this infection and may actually delay your recovery.

**Who is at risk for infection?**

Anyone can become infected with norovirus. People who have recovered from norovirus develop short-term immunity and are protected from re-infection for a short period of time. Because there are many different strains of norovirus, it is difficult for a person's body to develop long-lasting immunity. Anyone who has not been recently infected can get the illness again at any time throughout their lifetime.

**How can norovirus be prevented?**

- Frequent and thorough hand washing, especially after going to the bathroom and prior to handling food.
- If you are sick stay home, do not go to work or school for at least a day after symptoms end.
- Immediately clean contaminated surfaces with bleach-based cleaners.
- Promptly washing soiled clothing and linens in hot water.
- Avoiding food preparation, working in day care centers, or caring for patients in a health care facility until at least a day after symptoms have completely gone away.

**Who do I contact for suspected illness?**

Most people recover fully without medical treatment after 1-2 days. If you have a medical condition, severe dehydration or your symptoms last longer than a couple of days contact your healthcare professional.

Remember to frequently and thoroughly wash your hands throughout the day; stay home if you are not feeling well; and drink plenty of fluids.

Yamhill County Public Health  
412 NE Ford St. McMinnville  
Ph. 503-434-7525 or 554-7842  
[www.co.yamhill.or.us/ph](http://www.co.yamhill.or.us/ph)