

# Norwalk Virus

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## What is **Norwalk virus**?



**Norwalk viruses** are a group of viruses that cause the “stomach flu”, or gastroenteritis in people. Viruses are very different from bacteria and parasites, some of which can cause illnesses similar to norovirus. Viruses are much smaller, are not affected by treatment with antibiotics, and cannot grow outside of a person’s body.

## What are the symptoms of **Norwalk virus**?

The symptoms usually include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping. Sometimes people additionally have a low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and a general sense of tiredness. The illness often begins suddenly, and the infected person may feel very sick. The illness is usually brief, with symptoms lasting about only 1 or 2 days. In general children experience more vomiting than adults.

## How do people become infected with **Norwalk virus**?

Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected people. People can become infected in several ways, including:

- eating food or drinking liquids that has been contaminated with norovirus;
- touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus, and then placing their hands in their mouths; having direct contact with another person who is infected and showing symptoms (for example, when caring for someone with illness, or sharing foods or eating utensils with someone who is ill)

## Are **Noroviruses** contagious?

Noroviruses are very contagious and can spread easily from person to person.

## What is the **treatment**?

Currently there is no antiviral medication that works against norovirus and there is no vaccine to prevent infection. Noroviruses cannot be treated with antibiotics. This is because antibiotics work to fight bacteria and not viruses.

## How is **Norwalk virus** prevented?

- Thorough hand washing
- Carefully wash fruits and vegetables, and steam oysters before eating them
- Thoroughly clean contaminated surfaces

Any questions, contact Volusia County Health Department, (386) 274-0651 or

(386) 274-0633