

## Food

Norovirus is found in the vomit and faeces (poos) of humans and can contaminate food in two main ways. Food such as shellfish can pick up the virus if the sea water contains human sewage. Infected food handlers can also contaminate food if they prepare food while ill or do not wash their hands after going to the toilet.

- People with diarrhoea or vomiting should never prepare food for other people.
- Food handlers should wait for at least 48 hours after their diarrhoea stops before returning to work.
- Frequent hand washing is essential before and during food preparation.
- Only collect shellfish from places where there is no human sewage.
- Thoroughly cooking shellfish reduces the risk of viral gastroenteritis.

## Water in rural areas

Rivers and lakes can sometimes become contaminated with human faeces.

- Do not drink untreated river or lake water.
- If the water is untreated then boiling for one minute will kill the viruses.

### Prevention tips:

- ◇ Thorough hand washing is essential after going to the toilet, after caring for someone with diarrhoea and before food preparation.
- ◇ People with diarrhoea and vomiting should stay away from work and not prepare food for others.
- ◇ Only collect shellfish from places where there is no human sewage.



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# Viral Gastroenteritis (Norovirus)

Prevent this highly infectious disease



Viral gastroenteritis is a stomach upset caused by a virus.

Most viral gastroenteritis in adults are caused by a group of highly infectious viruses called "Norovirus".

## How does a person become infected?

Norovirus is only found in humans. The viruses are found in high numbers in the vomit and faeces (poos) of people with the infection. The most usual ways of catching the illness are contact with infected people, eating contaminated food (most commonly shellfish), or from drinking untreated water.

It is highly infectious and sometimes being in the same room where someone has vomited is enough to catch the illness.

## The signs and symptoms of the illness

- Symptoms usually appear 24-48 hours after becoming infected.
- The most common symptoms are nausea (feeling sick), stomach cramps, diarrhoea, vomiting, headache, chills and aching muscles.
- Vomiting is more common in children.
- Symptoms usually get better after 1-2 days.
- The disease is highly infectious and it is common for other people in your household to develop the illness after a day or so.

## Treatment of viral gastroenteritis

- Drink plenty of fluids while the diarrhoea lasts to prevent dehydration.
- See a doctor if vomiting is severe or the illness does not get better after 1-2 days.
- Please note that the illness is caused by a virus so antibiotics do not have any effect.

## Cleaning your home

- The viruses that cause viral gastroenteritis can survive outside the body and live on surfaces contaminated by vomit or faeces (poos).
- It is a good idea to regularly clean surfaces in the toilet and bathroom with household chlorine bleach-based cleaners such as Janola. Follow the directions on the bottle.



## How to avoid catching Norovirus or passing it on to others

The best way to avoid catching the illness is to wash your hands thoroughly by using plenty of soap, cleaning under fingernails, rinsing hands and thoroughly drying on a clean towel:

- Before and after preparing food
- After going to the toilet or changing a baby's nappy
- After caring for people with viral gastroenteritis

People with symptoms of viral gastroenteritis should immediately go home to avoid infecting other people. This is particularly important for health care workers and food handlers.

## Taking time off work or school

Usually people can go back to work and children can return to early childhood centres and school once they are symptom free for at least 48 hours.

There may be viruses in your bowel motions for a week or longer so it is very important to wash your hands thoroughly after going to the toilet.