



Viral gastroenteritis ('Noroviruses')

This fact sheet can be made available in other languages or formats on request by contacting 0161 770 6666. For further information please see our detailed fact sheet Information for all.

What are noroviruses?

They are a group of viruses that are the most common cause of gastroenteritis (stomach bugs) in England and Wales. In the past, noroviruses have also been called 'winter vomiting viruses', 'small round structured viruses' or 'Norwalk-like viruses'.

The symptoms of norovirus infection will begin around 12 to 48 hours after becoming infected. They start with the sudden onset of nausea followed by projectile vomiting and watery diarrhoea. Some people may have a raised temperature, headaches and aching limbs. Most people make a full recovery within 1-2 days, but some (usually the very young or elderly) may become very dehydrated and require hospital treatment.

Who can it affect?

Anyone. Norovirus often causes outbreaks because it is easily spread from one person to another and the virus is able to survive in the environment for many days.

Since there are many different strains of norovirus, and immunity is short-lived, outbreaks tend to affect the majority of susceptible people. Outbreaks usually tend to affect people who are in semi-closed environments such as hospitals, nursing homes and schools.

How is norovirus caught?

The virus is easily passed from one person to another. It can be caught from contact with an infected person, by eating contaminated food or water, or by contact with contaminated surfaces or objects.

How can I avoid catching it?

By good personal hygiene.

- Always wash and dry your hands thoroughly after going to the toilet;
- Always wash hands thoroughly after changing a baby's nappy;
- Always wash hands thoroughly before preparing and eating food; and
- Only drink water from safe sources, and if you are not sure boil it first.

What is the treatment?

There is no specific treatment for norovirus apart from letting the illness run its course. It is important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.

Do I need to stay off work or school?

You should stay away until you have been free from any symptoms for 48 hours.

What do I do if I or a member of my household has norovirus?

Make sure everybody washes their hands thoroughly with warm water and soap:

- After using or cleaning the toilet;
- After looking after another person with diarrhoea
- After changing a baby's nappy;
- After handling or washing soiled clothes and bedding;
- Before eating or preparing food.

Ensure each person affected has his or her own towel. You may need to supervise children to make sure they wash their hands properly.

Wash any soiled clothes or bedding on a hot cycle of the washing machine. Keep soiled washing separate from the rest of the washing.

Clean toilet seats, flush handles and taps frequently with hot soapy water. The toilet bowl should be cleaned with a toilet brush and disinfectant. Make sure the disinfectant conforms to a British Standard and follow the instructions carefully, and keep it in a safe place away from children. Wear rubber gloves to clean the toilet and don't use them for anything else.

Where possible, stay away from others (especially vulnerable people like the elderly and the very young) until your symptoms have stopped. Also try to avoid preparing food for anyone while you have the symptoms.

Contacting us

If you would like more information you can contact us by:

Writing to

Food Safety Team, Chadderton Town Hall, Middleton Road, Chadderton, Oldham, OL9 6PP

Phoning

0161 770 4484

Faxing

0161 770 4500

Emailing

env.foodsafety@oldham.gov.uk

For information about food poisoning and related illnesses please see our other detailed fact sheets listed below:

- [Campylobacter](#)
- [Cryptosporidiosis](#)
- [Dysentery \(*Shigella*\)](#)
- [E.coli O157](#)
- [Enteric fever \(typhoid and paratyphoid\)](#)
- [Farm visits](#)
- [Food poisoning](#)
- [Giardiasis](#)
- [Hand, foot and mouth disease](#)
- [Hepatitis A](#)
- [Infectious diseases](#)
- [Salmonella](#)
- [Staphylococcus aureus](#)

You can also get information from the following:

www.hpa-nw.org.uk - includes infection control guidance for Care Homes, Nurseries and Schools, as well as information on topical matters such as avian flu.

www.hpa.org.uk - further details on infectious diseases.

www.food.gov.uk - good hygiene practices and food safety.

We value your comments and suggestions

We want to provide good quality service for people in Oldham and as we are a public service you have a say in what we do. We want you to be completely satisfied with our services but to ensure this we need to know what you think. What do we do best? Where could we improve things? Do you have any ideas or suggestions? Only by listening to you can we give you the service you deserve.

If you wish to make a comment about our services you can e-mail us on

[**customer.feedback@oldham.gov.uk**](mailto:customer.feedback@oldham.gov.uk)

or you can phone us on 0161 770 4191

or you can write to us:

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