



HEALTH INFORMATION

Avoiding Gastrointestinal Disturbances

Norovirus is one of the most common stomach bugs and can be very unpleasant. The symptoms are caused by inflammation of the stomach and intestines. Although Norovirus is commonly known as the winter vomiting bug, this can be incurred at any time of the year and affects all ages.

Norovirus spreads very easily in public places. People with Norovirus are contagious from the moment they start feeling ill until at least three days after symptoms stop. It is possible to become infected from the bodily excretions of an infected person.

Whether it is a virus or bacteria you should always follow the golden rules:

Food handling

- Keep yourself and your kitchen clean by washing and drying your hands thoroughly – be aware, viruses can survive outside of the body for several days:
- Wash hands before preparing food
- Wash hands after touching raw food, especially meat
- Wash hands after going to the toilet
- Make sure you keep worktops, chopping boards and utensils clean. If they've been touched by raw meat, poultry or eggs, you'll need to wash them thoroughly. Don't forget to change dish cloths and tea towels regularly.
- Avoid handling food if you are ill, especially with any gastrointestinal problems and especially avoid handling foods for others.
- Avoid working in the kitchen in soiled clothing
- Remove watch, rings and bracelets before cooking and washing hands

Bacteria

- Bacteria can be killed by thorough cooking:
- Always follow the instructions on the label
- Always check your food is steaming hot in the middle – there should be steam coming out
- Don't reheat food more than once
- When reheating, take extra care your food is cooked all the way through.

Viruses

- Viruses can be caught through air droplets so follow the catch it, bin it, kill it rule!
- Avoid close contact with someone with Norovirus as they may breath out small particles containing the virus which you could inhale
- Cover all cuts, burns and sores and change dressings regularly - pay extra attention to any open wounds on hands and arms.

Symptoms

Symptoms will normally last one to three days and usually clear up without medical intervention.

- Suddenly feeling or being sick
- Projectile vomiting
- Watery diarrhoea
- Mild fever
- Headache
- Stomach pain/cramps
- Aching limbs

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Management

- Stay off work for a minimum of 48 hours until symptoms have passed – if you work in the food industry you will need to be 48 hour symptom free before returning to work
- Avoid visiting anyone in hospital during this time
- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water – do not rely on alcohol hand gels, they do not kill the virus
- Disinfect surfaces or objects that could be contaminated – this is best with a bleach based household cleaner
- Flush away any infected bodily excretions
- Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration – this is likely to be more than usual . Fluids would include: water, fruit juice and soup
- Take paracetamol for any fever or aches and pains
- Ensure plenty of rest
- Consider plain foods such as: soup, rice, pasta and bread
- Consider anti-diarrhoea medication – although these are not suitable for everyone and if you are taking regular medication it is recommended advice is sought from your GP
- If your symptoms have lasted more than a few days, seek advice from your GP or call NHS 24 on 111

For more information

www.eatwell.gov.uk/keepingfoodsafe/storing/

www.nhs.uk/conditions/norovirus

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