

Norovirus Infection

Clinical Description:

Noroviruses, the most common causes of viral gastroenteritis, are very contagious, with symptoms including watery diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue. Most cases have no fever or a slight fever. Illness is self-limiting, and symptoms generally last 24 - 48 hours. Although often termed "stomach flu," norovirus infection should not be confused with influenza, which is a respiratory illness.

Incubation Period:

Symptoms usually begin 24 - 48 hours (range of 12 - 72 hours) after exposure.

Mode of Transmission:

Norovirus is transmitted by the fecal-oral route.

Period of Communicability:

A person can spread norovirus when experiencing symptoms and up to 72 hours after recovery. Some studies indicate that those infected can shed virus up to two weeks after recovery. Only a very small dose of virus is needed to cause infection.

Exclusion/Reporting:

It is recommended that persons with diarrhea and/or vomiting be excluded from attending school until asymptomatic for at least 24 hours.

Prevention/Care:

Encourage frequent hand washing, particularly after using the restroom, assisting someone with diarrhea and/or vomiting, after swimming, and before and after food preparation. Please refer to the ISDH Handwashing Campaign at <http://www.in.gov/isdh/24036.htm>. Enforce exclusion of ill students or staff members. Inform caregivers of children experiencing signs of dehydration to seek medical attention. Regular, scheduled cleaning of surfaces in restrooms with bleach or another EPA-approved, spore-killing disinfectant is advised.

Outbreaks:

According to the ISDH Communicable Disease Reporting Rule (410 IAC 1-2.3) the definition of an outbreak means cases of disease occurring in a community, region, or particular population at a rate in excess of that which is normally expected. A norovirus outbreak is two or more cases of a similar illness shown by an investigation to have resulted from a common exposure, such as ingestion of a common food. If an outbreak is suspected and/or documented, contact your local health department. For additional information and recommendations regarding the preparation for, and the management of an outbreak situation in a school setting, see Appendix A, "Managing an Infectious Disease Outbreak In a School Setting."

Other Resources:

Indiana State Department of Health Quick Facts Page (found on disease/condition page):

<http://bit.ly/12lJLfD>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

<http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/index.html>