

Stay One Step Ahead of Diarrhoea and Vomiting

Norovirus is a stomach bug that causes vomiting and diarrhoea. It spreads easily, mainly from person to person but also through contaminated food or water, and you can catch it more than once. Outbreaks are common in places where people are in close contact, such as hospitals, care homes, schools and nurseries.

What are the symptoms of norovirus infection?

The incubation period is usually 12–48 hours. Symptoms can start suddenly and include nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea, with possible fever, stomach pain and aching limbs.

How long are you contagious for with norovirus?

People are most infectious while symptomatic but can spread norovirus before and after symptoms. You should stay home and avoid preparing food for 48 hours after symptoms stop.

How long do norovirus symptoms last?

For most people, norovirus is unpleasant but short-lived, and they recover in 2–3 days without treatment. However, vulnerable individuals can develop complications like dehydration, which may lead to hospitalisation.

How long does norovirus last on surfaces?

Norovirus can survive on surfaces for long periods, helping it spread easily. Clean contaminated areas thoroughly with a bleach-based disinfectant and wear disposable gloves if possible.

What treatment is there for norovirus?

There's no specific treatment for norovirus, and antibiotics don't work against viruses. The focus is on preventing dehydration by drinking plenty of fluids. Older adults, young children and people with weakened immune systems are at higher risk of dehydration and may need medical care.

Norovirus cases are over 50% higher than the 5-season average, especially among people aged 65+ and in hospitals. UKHSA (UK Health Security Agency) is urging people to take simple steps to reduce the spread.

How can I avoid catching norovirus?

Good hand hygiene is crucial to stop norovirus spreading. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm water, particularly after using the toilet, before eating or preparing food, and after cleaning up vomit or diarrhoea. Alcohol-based hand sanitisers don't kill norovirus.

How to reduce the spread of infection:

- Wash hands often with soap and warm water—alcohol gels don't kill norovirus.
- Clean surfaces with bleach-based disinfectant.
- Avoid visiting hospitals or care homes until 48 hours after symptoms stop.
- Stay off school or work for at least 2 days after symptoms end.
- Avoid swimming pools for 48 hours after symptoms.
- Wash contaminated clothes or bedding at 60°C and wear gloves when handling items; disinfect affected surfaces thoroughly.

Some good news... while norovirus is increasing, cases of flu and RSV continue to fall. However, people are encouraged to continue taking infection prevention measures listed above, as respiratory viruses can be unpredictable.

Diarrhoea and vomiting bugs can spread easily



Follow these simple steps to avoid infecting others

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You may also have:



High temperature



Headache



Aching arms and legs

Stay at home for 48 hours after your symptoms clear:

DON'T



Go to work or school, visit care homes or hospitals



Prepare food for others

Got these symptoms?



Feeling sick



Diarrhoea



Being sick

Stay at home for 48 hours after your symptoms clear:

DO



Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water



Wash soiled clothes and bedding at 60 degrees

For more information on how to help yourself or your family members recover, visit the NHS website.

