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FACT SHEET

Norovirus

Noroviruses are a group of highly infectious viruses that cause acute inflammation in the stomach and gastrointestinal tract. Worldwide it is the leading cause of acute stomach illness. In the United States it is the causes over 20 million individuals to become ill each year. It is mistakenly called the stomach flu yet it is different than influenza (a respiratory illness). People can get norovirus many times throughout their lives. The best protection against Norovirus by using good hand hygiene.

<http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/about/overview.html>

Symptoms: Norovirus infection usually presents as a sudden onset of vomiting, watery non-bloody diarrhea with abdominal cramps, and nausea. Low-grade fever occasionally occurs while vomiting is more common in children. Dehydration is the most reported complication, especially among the young and elderly, and may require medical attention. Symptoms usually last about 24 to 60 hours. Recovery is usually complete and there is no evidence of any serious long-term problems.

Spread: Noroviruses are transmitted primarily through the fecal-oral route, either by consumption food or water contaminated by feces of an infected person or by direct person-to-person spread. Environmental sources and objects capable of being contaminated may also act as a source of infection. Good evidence exists for transmission due to aerosolization (virus particles in the air) of vomitus that most likely results in droplets contaminating surfaces or entering the oral mucosa and being swallowed.

Noroviruses are highly contagious, and as few as 10 viral particles may be enough to infect an individual. Norovirus can spread quickly in closed places like daycare centers, nursing homes, schools, and cruise ships. During outbreaks of norovirus gastroenteritis, several modes of transmission have been documented; for example, initial foodborne transmission in a restaurant, followed by secondary person-to-person transmission to household contacts.

Incubation: The incubation period for norovirus-associated gastroenteritis in humans is usually between 24 and 48 hours (median in outbreaks 33 to 36 hours), but cases can occur within 12 hours of exposure.

Contagious Period: People are most infectious during the illness and for a few days afterward but the virus may continue shedding for 2 weeks after recovery.

**Diagnosis and
Treatment:**

Stool and vomit samples are used to test for detecting the presence of noroviruses.

Although no specific treatment exists for viral gastroenteritis, symptoms can be treated with fluids and correcting electrolyte disturbances through oral and intravenous fluid administration.

Prevention:

Correct handling of cold foods, frequent hand washing, staying home when you are ill especially if the individual is involved with a daycare, long term care facility, or food handler. This may substantially reduce transmission of noroviruses.