

NOROVIRUS (Stomach Flu)

Norovirus is the second most frequent cause of illness after the common cold. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain, and occur between 24 and 48 hours after exposure. Norovirus can be life-threatening for very young, elderly and immunocompromised persons.

Six simple steps to protect against and stop the spread of Noroviruses or Stomach Flu as outlined by the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology, Inc.(APIC) include:

1) Practice Proper Hand Hygiene

Frequent hand hygiene is always the best defense. This includes washing hands for at least 15-20 seconds (sing the happy birthday song twice).

2) Clean with Bleach

If you've had the bug, use a bleach-containing cleaner to disinfect all surfaces. Wear disposable gloves, and don't forget "frequent touch" surfaces like door knobs and light switches. After cleaning, dispose of or sanitize rags in hot water and bleach.

3) Food and Water Safety

Avoid joining an estimated 9.2 million cases of food borne norovirus infections each year by preventing food contamination. Always wash raw food before eating, and don't eat food prepared by someone who is ill until 2-3 days after symptoms have cleared. Do not share drinking glasses or bottles.

4) Don't Air Your Dirty Laundry

Direct contact with a sick person is not required to contaminate soft surfaces. The norovirus can spread from a contaminated pillowcase to a clean towel in a pile of laundry. To disinfect laundry, wash with hot water, bleach (see container for directions) and dry on "high." Discard solid waste (vomit/stool) in the toilet. Close the lid when flushing.

5) Contain Outbreaks

Immediately quarantine those who are sick. Don't forget to disinfect everything from the washing machine to the bleach bottle, and wear protective gloves while cleaning.

6) Prevent Outbreaks

Don't wait for an outbreak to occur to clean up. Ward off norovirus by maintaining a clean household and regularly disinfecting surfaces.