

# Norovirus



## WHAT IS IT?

**Norovirus** causes vomiting and diarrhea, typically within 24 hours of exposure to viral particles from an infectious person. It is the **#1** cause of foodborne illness but is not always associated with food. It occurs commonly in long-term care settings and in other situations where people gather. The virus is persistent and requires aggressive techniques to be inactivated.

## WHY SHOULD I CARE?

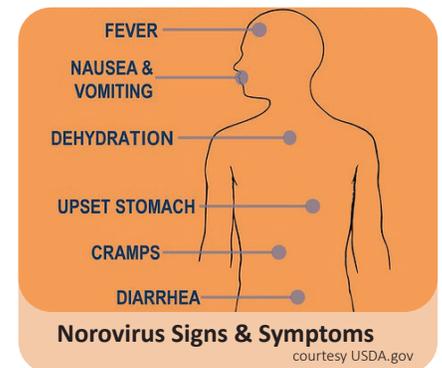
- **>20 million** norovirus illnesses occur annually in the US alone
- **\$500** estimated as the cost per illness
- **\$100 billion** spent annually on norovirus healthcare

Additionally:

- Norovirus **mutates** often so people can be infected over and over.

## WHAT DO I DO ABOUT IT?

1. Recognize and manage the signs/symptoms, and potential source.
  - Identify employees who are ill, have policies to incentivize and require staying home.
  - If a guest/visitor becomes ill, respond quickly to contain and disinfect any bodily fluid spills and surrounding areas and exclude other people from the area.
  - Pay attention to disease tracking metrics – to be aware of illness risks in the local area that could spread within the facility.
  - Be aware of what RTE foods could be contaminated – e.g., raw shellfish.
2. Implement valid preventive strategies.
  - Illness policies
  - Personal hygiene practices
  - Proper cooking of foods
  - Ensure that the primary source of RTE foods is not an endemic area or contaminated.
3. Verify that practices are in place and being followed consistently.
  - Have training protocols with periodic knowledge checks.
  - Review records of relevant practices – routine sanitation, restroom cleanliness and availability of hand hygiene products, adherence to employee illness protocols.
  - Have sanitation chemicals (e.g., disinfectants) with claims against norovirus are readily available and unexpired.
  - Have internal and 3rd party audits performed.
4. Respond as needed to identified lapses in any protocols.



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