



I need HELP when
I feel sick

Are you and your family feeling sick?

Some community members have let us know that they are experiencing an upset stomach, vomiting and/or diarrhea. This could be caused by Norovirus, a group of viruses that cause these type of symptoms and are common throughout BC in the winter. It is very easy to spread norovirus in your home, daycare, school or workplace.

How does the virus spread?

- Norovirus can be found in the vomit and diarrhea of people who are sick. When someone vomits, people nearby may become infected by swallowing tiny droplets from the air.
- The virus can also be spread on surfaces like countertops or sink taps.
- The virus can also be spread if an infected person does not wash their hands or if someone with this illness handles food, water or ice.
- Some foods can be contaminated with the virus at their source. For example, shellfish may be contaminated by sewage water before they are harvested.

Stay home when you are sick!

- People who are ill and work as food handlers or care providers should stay away from work while they are sick and for 2 days after they are better. Even when diarrhea and vomiting have stopped, the virus can still be in the stool (bowel movement) for as long as 2 weeks. Be sure to wash your hands carefully and often.
- If someone is ill with norovirus, discourage visitors to the home. It is best to wait for at least 2 days after everyone is better and the house is cleaned and disinfected.
- When a family member is sick with vomiting or diarrhea, it is a good idea for that person to try to stay in a separate room and not be around others, as the virus spreads easily.
- Everyone in the family should wash their hands often with soap and water. Use different towels or paper towels for drying hands to help stop the spread to other people.

Is there a treatment?

- It is important that you drink enough clear fluids, such as water, so you do not get dehydrated. You could also drink other fluids such as juices, clear soups, or oral rehydration fluids for vomiting or diarrhea.
- If you have norovirus, medications are not usually used to treat norovirus. People infected with norovirus usually get better within a few days.
- Antibiotics should not be taken for norovirus. Antibiotics only work to fight bacteria and not viruses.

When should you seek medical care?

See a health care provider if diarrhea or vomiting lasts more than 2 or 3 days, or if dehydration is a concern.

How can you prevent infection with the virus?

There is no vaccine or medication that can prevent norovirus infection. The best way to prevent infection is to stop the virus from spreading. To help stop the spread of the virus, follow these tips:

- Wash your hands, especially after using the toilet, changing diapers or before eating or preparing food. Proper hand washing requires running water, soap and cleansing of the hands for about 20 seconds.
- Disinfect bathrooms used by sick people with a freshly made 1:50 solution of bleach and water.
- Throw out any food that has been handled by a person with the virus or exposed while a person vomited.
- Wash dishes and utensils with hot water and detergent or in a dishwasher.
- Wash laundry soiled with vomit or diarrhea in a washing machine using detergent.
- Do not eat raw or undercooked shellfish. Cooking will destroy the virus.

How should I disinfect surfaces?

To make a 1:50 (1,000 ppm) solution of bleach and water:

- Mix 20 ml (3/4 of an ounce) of bleach with 1 litre (1 quart) of water.
- Use Public Health Ontario's chlorine dilution calculator tool to make up the proper sanitizer strength based on the concentration of your bleach product

- www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/Tools/Pages/Dilution-Calculator.aspx

How should I properly wash my hands?

To properly wash your hands, or your child's hands, follow the steps below:

1. Remove rings or other jewelry on the hands and wrists
2. Wet your hands with warm water
3. Wash all parts of your hands with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and rub hands together to create lather (to help children wash their hands long enough, sing the ABC song)
4. Rinse hands well under warm running water
5. Dry hands with a clean cloth or paper towel
6. Use the towel to turn off the tap and open the door when you leave if you are in a public restroom



Want to learn more?

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/norovirus>

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/hand-washing>

Want to talk to a health care professional?

Go to your home and community health nurse, family Doctor, Nurse Practitioner

Call Health Link BC, your provincial health line, 8-1-1 is toll-free in B.C. or for deaf and hearing-impaired, call 7-1-1. A Registered Nurse is available any time, or a pharmacist from 5pm to 9am, every day of the year.