

NOROVIRUS: Facts for Food Establishments

What is Norovirus?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognize Norovirus as the most common cause of acute gastroenteritis in the U.S. It is a highly contagious virus and is called by other names, such as food poisoning and stomach flu. Symptoms include diarrhea, vomiting and stomach pain. There are many types of norovirus and you can get it more than once.

How can Norovirus spread in my food establishment?



About 50% of all outbreaks of food-related illness are caused by norovirus. In many cases, sick food handlers were involved in spreading the virus.

Food can get contaminated with norovirus when—

- infected people who have stool or vomit on their hands touch the food,
- it is placed on counters and surfaces that have infectious stool or vomit, or
- tiny drops of vomit from an infected person spray into the air and land on food.

Foods can also be contaminated at their source (ex. oysters, fruits and veggies).

What can I do to *prevent* the spread of Norovirus?



Practice proper hand hygiene

Wash hands with soap and water after using the restroom and before handling or preparing food.



When you are sick, do not prepare food for others—exclude ill workers

People who have norovirus illness can shed billions of norovirus particles and are highly contagious. You can easily contaminate food and drinks you touch. People who consume the food or drinks you touch can get norovirus and get sick.



No bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods

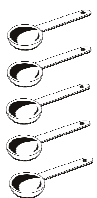
Ready-to-eat foods such as salads, fruit and bread should not be touched with bare hands as there will be no opportunity to kill bacteria by cooking.



HELP! How do I clean up and disinfect for Norovirus?

Anything that has been in contact with diarrhea or vomit should be discarded or disinfected. A chlorine bleach solution (1,000 ppm) is effective for sanitizing and disinfecting surfaces. Higher chlorine bleach concentrations (5,000 ppm) are necessary for surfaces directly contaminated with diarrhea/feces or vomit.


General disinfectant



BLEACH 5.25% + 1 gallon water


5 tbsp. bleach

concentration ~ 1,000 ppm



1 gallon


For surfaces contaminated with diarrhea or vomit



BLEACH 5.25% + 1 gallon water

1 2/3 cup bleach

concentration ~ 5,000 ppm



1 gallon

Other disinfectants registered as effective against norovirus by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may also be used. Quaternary ammonia sanitizers are not effective against noroviruses.

If you think your food establishment may have been exposed to norovirus, contact your local Department of Health, Food Safety Branch immediately:

Oahu: (808)586-8000 • Hilo: (808)933-0917 • Kona: (808)322-1507 • Maui: (808)984-8230 • Kauai: (808)241-3323