

---

*Serving Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, Mclean, Ohio, Union and Webster Counties*

## **The Norovirus/Stomach Flu: What You Need to Know**

You may have seen the headlines in newspapers across the United States about increasing occurrences of the Norovirus aboard cruise ships, restaurants, and many places where people congregate. The Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause the “stomach flu,” or gastroenteritis in people. Noroviruses account for up to 90% of all stomach flu in the United States. This virus is not selective in where it attacks. It has been seen in many facilities, even those such as nursing homes, daycare centers, hospitals, schools, and other places where at-risk individuals reside.

There are a few things that make the Norovirus different. First, the virus can be a problem to contain due to its’ virulence and persistence nature. It is very difficult to kill and has only been found to be controlled by cleaning and sanitizing surfaces using a strong (1:9 concentration) bleach solution or a phenol solution.

Second, this virus is extremely contagious and can be spread very rapidly from person to person. Since the mode of transmission is fecal-oral, proper hand hygiene is critical, especially in facilities where there is a lot of person to person contact, such as daycares. A person can be exposed to this virus by contaminated food or water, touching surfaces or objects contaminated with Norovirus, or by having direct contact with another person who is infected. This is why facilities such as nursing homes, daycare centers, cruise ships, and other places where close contact is common can have a problem with this virus. Symptoms of Norovirus illness usually begin about 24 to 48 hours after ingestion of the virus, but they can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure. As with many GI illnesses, the symptoms of this virus may include vomiting, diarrhea, cramping, and nausea. Sometimes people also have a low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue. It is recommended that people who are ill with this virus should be isolated and kept away from others until at least 2-3 days after the symptoms have resolved. This is especially true for children in a daycare setting due to the increased risk of transmission of disease from child to child from close contact.

It is very important that we recognize the Norovirus and the impact that it can have, especially on those at risk populations, such as the elderly, immunocompromised, or very young. In most people the illness is self-limiting with symptoms lasting for about 1 or 2 days, but can be more serious in those at risk individuals, especially children. Dehydration is a serious health effect that can result from a Norovirus infection, so proper rehydration is essential. Always remember to have the child drink plenty of liquids to keep them hydrated. If your child is experiencing this virus, or any other illness, please consult your family physician. Also remember to educate daycare staff and children on proper handwashing techniques. With proper hand hygiene, cleaning control measures, and education, the Norovirus will have a harder time setting a firm foundation in our community. Please feel

free to contact me with any questions, Thank you!  
**Janie Cambron, 270-686-7747**