

Have you Heard of Norovirus?

What is Norovirus?

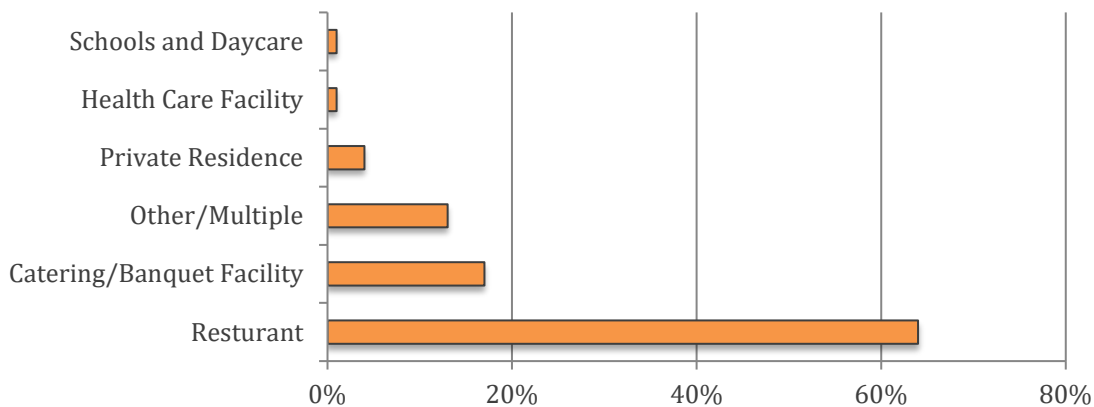
Norovirus, also known as the “Stomach Bug,” is a very contagious virus that causes gastrointestinal illness in humans. It is the most common cause of illness from contaminated food in the United States, but also the most preventable. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an estimated 20 million Americans get sick with the virus each year, with nearly 800 of those sicknesses resulting in death. In order to reduce the number of people getting sick or dying from Norovirus, it is important that we follow preventative procedures within our organizations and businesses.

Where is it?

Norovirus is the most common cause of illness from contaminated food in the United States. This puts facilities that frequently work with food (and may already be at risk for contamination) at an additional risk of contracting and spreading the virus. The chart below shows the most common places for Norovirus to occur as a result of food contamination. Restaurants are responsible for about 64% of all cases.

Where do Norovirus Outbreaks from Food Contamination Happen?

CDC National Outbreak Reporting System, 2009-2012



What should we look for?

The most common symptoms of Norovirus include diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and/or stomach pain. Additionally, others may experience fever, headache, and/or body aches. People typically develop symptoms 12 to 48 hours after being exposed to the virus, and most get better within 1 to 3 days.

How does it spread?

Norovirus is known for being able to spread with ease from one person to another. You can catch it by ingesting contaminated foods or drinks, or by touching any contaminated surface, then touching your nose, mouth or eyes. The virus is also aerosolized, meaning that a person can inhale the virus through air if an infected person vomits or flushes a toilet.

What can we do to prevent an Outbreak?

The best way to prevent a Norovirus infection is through careful handwashing and good general hygiene. Be sure all foods being served have been properly handled and prepared, and avoid raw shellfish and undercooked seafood.

The CDC recommends that if you have been infected with Norovirus, do not prepare food for others for at least two days after you recover. Carefully wash any potentially contaminated laundry and clean toilets, bathroom surfaces, and all kitchen areas with a bleach-based solution.

To protect yourself and others from Norovirus, consider these preventative measures you and your employees can take everyday:



Additional Resources:

For more information on how Norovirus is spread, and its symptoms and treatment:

<https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/about/index.html>

For more information on how food workers can prevent the spread of Norovirus:

<https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/food-handlers/work-with-food.html>

For information on state and federal food code set by the FDA:

<https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/RetailFoodProtection/FoodCode/ucm2006808.htm>

For an FDA developed Employee Health and Personal Hygiene Handbook:

<https://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/retailfoodprotection/industryandregulatoryassistanceandtrainingresources/ucm113827.htm>