

Norovirus

Norovirus causes diarrhoea and vomiting. It is one of the most common stomach bugs in Ireland. It's also called the 'winter vomiting bug'. This is because it's more common in winter. But you can catch it at any time of the year.

Norovirus can be unpleasant but it usually clears up by itself in a few days.

You can normally look after yourself or your child at home.

Try to avoid going to your GP, as norovirus can spread to others very easily.

Symptoms of norovirus

You're likely to have norovirus if you:

- feel sick
- get sick (vomit)
- have diarrhoea

Some people also have a slight fever, headaches, painful stomach cramps and aching limbs.

The symptoms start 1 to 2 days after you become infected and last for up to 2 or 3 days.

Treatment for norovirus

The best thing to do is to stay at home until you're feeling better. There's no cure for norovirus, so you have to let it run its course.

Antibiotics will not help because it's caused by a virus.

You do not usually need to get medical advice unless there's a risk of a more serious problem.

[How to treat diarrhoea and vomiting in children and adults](#)

How norovirus is spread

Norovirus spreads very easily in public places such as hospitals, nursing homes and schools.

You can catch it if small particles of vomit or poo from an infected person get into your mouth.

This can happen through:

- close contact with someone with norovirus - they may breathe out small particles containing the virus that you could inhale
- touching contaminated surfaces or objects - the virus can survive outside the body for several days
- eating contaminated food - this can happen if an infected person does not wash their hands before handling food

You are most infectious from when your symptoms start until 48 hours after all your symptoms have passed. You may also be infectious for a short time before and after this.

You can get norovirus more than once as the virus is always changing. Because of this, your body is cannot build up long-term resistance to it.

Preventing norovirus

It's not always possible to avoid getting norovirus, but following the advice below can help stop the virus spreading.

- Stay off work or school until at least 48 hours after the symptoms have passed. You should also avoid visiting anyone in hospital during this time.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water. Do not rely on alcohol hand gels, as they do not kill the virus.
- Disinfect any surfaces or objects that could be contaminated. It's best to use a bleach-based household cleaner.
- Wash any items of clothing or bedding that could have become contaminated separately on a hot wash to ensure the virus is killed.
- Don't share towels and flannels.
- Flush away any infected poo or vomit in the toilet and clean the surrounding area.
- Avoid eating raw, unwashed produce.

[How to clean your hands](#)

[Common illnesses](#)

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