

# NOROVIRUS

## WHAT CAN I DO?

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Recently Norovirus outbreaks have been in the news, both related to cruise ships and restaurant chains. There has been a lot of discussion in professional circles around the topic with people wondering how to prevent an outbreak from happening to them.

### HOW IT SPREADS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have identified three primary modes of transmission for Norovirus:

- Eating or drinking contaminated foods or liquids
- Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with Norovirus, then putting your fingers in your mouth
- Having direct contact with an infected person

### PREVENTION

Norovirus is highly contagious and, as you see, food is only one method for transmission—it can come from the air or can live on hard surfaces. There are three areas you can focus on as a start:

- Train employees and monitor employee illness
- Keep “touch points” clean
- Understand proper cleaning procedures if there is a vomiting or diarrhea incident

### TRAINING AND MONITORING

#### Training and monitoring employee illness

- Food Service employees must report to their manager when they have vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, sore throat with fever or infected lesions. This should be part of your illness policy, and all employees should sign off that they are aware of this responsibility.
- I believe in using “the words” - don’t just say “let me know if you are or have been sick”. Emphasize to employees to report to you when they have had vomiting and/or diarrhea.
- What people call “stomach flu” is generally Norovirus. This can spread through families, co-workers and restaurant guests. Your guests can bring it in the front door.
- Employees with “stomach flu” should stay home for two days after symptoms stop. Hopefully they either have sick pay or can swap shifts with co-workers.
- Handwashing especially vital after using the restroom and in the kitchen!

Keep “touch points” clean - thoroughly clean daily or if infection is suspected (if an employee reports or goes home with any gastrointestinal symptoms) Think about surfaces that your guests and associates touch, such as the following:

- Door handles—front doors, foyers, restrooms
- Tables and chairs including the back or chairs and side surfaces
- Elevator buttons
- Kitchen equipment—not only the usual wash, rinse, sanitize but also when you are moving it and putting it away with clean hands
- Drinking fountains
- Railings
- Counters and condiment stands

#### Understand proper cleaning if there is a vomiting or diarrhea incident

- Every kitchen should have a biohazard clean up kit
- Don’t just hang biohazard kits on the wall—conduct periodic trainings
- Understand and practice thorough cleaning procedures using proper disinfectants
- Do not grab any cleaning equipment from the kitchen like brooms and mops—not only will these also become contaminated but they will send Norovirus particles into the air.

For Norovirus prevention and response tips, see our [Norovirus readiness kit](#)