

FACT SHEET

Norovirus

Common clinical features

Vomiting, diarrhoea, fever, nausea, headache, malaise for 24 – 48 hours. All age groups affected.

Incubation period

Usually 24 – 48 hours

Where is it found?

Gastrointestinal tract of man

How is it acquired by affected individuals?

Very easily transmitted from person to person by the faecal oral route. Easily acquired by persons in the vicinity of vomiting individuals, when aerosolised particles are ingested. Infection may also be acquired from the contaminated environment. Food may be contaminated by affected individuals, including those who are asymptomatic or incubating or convalescing from illness (for 48 hours after symptoms cease). Shellfish (bivalve molluscs) filter the virus particles from sewage in sea water and can be the source of infection if eaten raw. Large outbreaks occur in hospitals, nursing homes, schools and other semi-closed communities such as cruise ships.

How does the laboratory confirm the diagnosis?

An immunoassay test to detect virus antigens in faeces may be available locally and molecular tests are available in specialist laboratories. Results are usually available within 1 day of the laboratory receiving the specimen. When a large outbreak has been confirmed later cases with similar symptoms will not be tested.

How is it treated?

Symptomatic treatment only required, no specific treatment.