



Norovirus Remains #1 Risk to Food Service Business

By Jeff Anderson, PhD

This year and every year, one of the biggest public health risks for foodservice businesses is norovirus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that about 20 million people get sick from norovirus each year, making it the *leading cause of disease outbreaks* from contaminated food.

What Is Norovirus?

Norovirus is a group of viruses that cause what is commonly called the stomach flu, or acute gastroenteritis. Symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Because norovirus is transmitted in many ways – person-to-person, and through food, water, and contaminated surfaces – outbreaks can occur in many settings, especially food service.

Norovirus is hard to kill and stays on food, kitchen surfaces and utensils. It can:

- Remain infectious on foods even at freezing temperatures and until heated above 140°F
- Survive on surfaces for 2 weeks or longer
- Resist many common disinfectants and sanitizers

How Do People Become Infected With Norovirus?

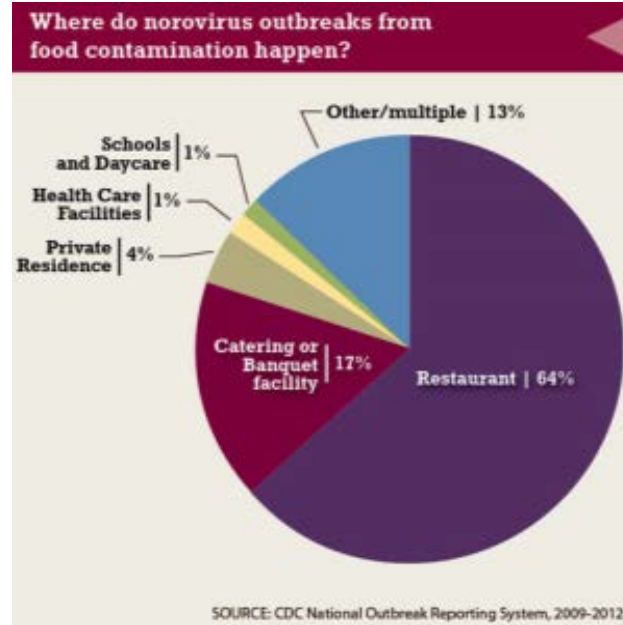
Norovirus is very contagious and can rapidly spread within a foodservice business, which makes it a significant health concern for the food service industry. People can not only become infected by eating contaminated food and touching contaminated surfaces, but by also being exposed to the virus by projectile or explosive vomiting or diarrhea of infected people.

Emergency Plans and Procedures

Due to the high concentrations of norovirus found in the vomit and feces of infected individuals, the FDA mandates that these events be considered emergencies in foodservice establishments and these fluids be treated as though they contain norovirus.

Emergency Plan Fundamentals

1. Established procedure for safe & effective bodily spill clean-up to meet OSHA standards.
2. EPA-registered disinfectant for efficacy against norovirus
3. Tools and PPE for safety and effectiveness.
4. Knowledge of when to activate your procedure and how to help employees activate.
5. Training for employees responsible for cleaning up these incidents.



Procedure Elements

It is impossible to predict, or prevent, vomit or diarrheal events in any facility, so the best way to prepare is by having an established plan for handling the situation.

Your plan should include:

- ✓ Use of a registered disinfectant
- ✓ PPE to meet OSHA compliance
- ✓ Step-wise process to clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces.

Clean Up Kit

Many companies produce clean-up kits. We recommend kits that contain:

- Disposable PPE , including gloves, apron, face/eye shields, shoe & hair covers
- Absorbent powder to solidify debris
- Scoop to remove the absorbent material
- Registered disinfectant
- Wipes or paper towels
- Large plastic bag for disposal of materials



Emergency Clean-Up Procedure

1. Request people clear the area and make sure they do not enter other key areas, such as food prep, storage, or service, to avoid further contamination.
2. PPE should be put on in this order. The order is important to prevent damage to disposable gloves:
 - ❖ Apron
 - ❖ Shoe covers, then hair cover
 - ❖ Face shield & goggles
 - ❖ Gloves
3. Apply the absorbent powder over the vomit or diarrhea spill. Allow it to soak up any liquid so it becomes solidified.
4. Scoop up the solidified material and place into the large plastic bag. *Note: carpeted areas and soft surfaces present special circumstances, see below.*
5. Apply disinfectant to the entire area and allow to dwell according to the label directions.

6. Use paper towels or wipes to clean up the disinfectant and place into the large plastic bag.
7. Remove PPE and place in the large plastic bag, making sure to remove your gloves last so that hands are not contaminated.
8. Close the bag with a twist tie and immediately transfer to an outside dumpster or trash container. In most locals, this material can be placed into the dumpster and is not considered a biohazard, but verify with your local regulations.
9. Lastly, wash hands and any exposed part of the arms.

Choose the Right Cleaning & Sanitation Partner

P&G Professional can partner with you to ensure you have the necessary tools, products and procedures in place to mitigate the transmission of norovirus, as well as respond and recover in the event of an emergency.



Carpeted Areas & Soft Surfaces

These areas are more difficult to clean. Keep the following in mind with soft surfaces:

- Refrain from vacuuming a contaminated area prior to disinfecting as it can spread the contamination
- Chlorine bleach may not be the best disinfectant as it may damage the material. Instead:
- Steam clean the area at 158°F for at least 5 minutes, or at 212°F for one minute.

Jeff Anderson, Ph.D. is a Public Health and Sanitation Consultant at Procter & Gamble Professional. Anderson helps customers mitigate public health risk factors within their operations using science-based strategies, and provides food safety education and certification to foodservice managers throughout the US. Anderson has authored and co-authored 15 technical papers in publications related to topics in infection control, microbiology, and chemistry.

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