

Norovirus

A foodborne pathogen you should know



Norovirus is recognised as the most important cause of non-bacterial outbreaks of gastroenteritis worldwide. Although it is a serious problem in many countries, this foodborne hazard can be prevented easily. Let us know more about the virus!

Q: What is norovirus?

A: Norovirus is known as Small Round Structured Virus (SRSV). Gastroenteritis caused by norovirus is usually mild and self-limiting. Symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, non-bloody diarrhoea and abdominal cramps. According to literature, norovirus is a common pathogen of viral gastroenteritis and noroviral gastroenteritis is more common in winter.



Q: How does norovirus spread?

A: The only known host for norovirus is infected human. It can be spread by fecal-oral route via contaminated food and water. Other major modes of transmission include person-to-person spread, contact with contaminated object and aerosol spread.

Q: Which kinds of food are commonly identified as the source of outbreaks?

A: As norovirus is commonly found in sewage-contaminated water, the shellfish harvested from polluted water or vegetables irrigated with polluted water are very likely to be contaminated. Ice, salad, raw vegetables and shellfish have been identified as the media of food poisoning outbreaks caused by norovirus.



Therefore, consumption of these contaminated foods poses a high risk of norovirus infection.

Q: How to prevent norovirus infection?

A: The key to the prevention of norovirus infection is the strict observance of food, personal and environmental hygiene.



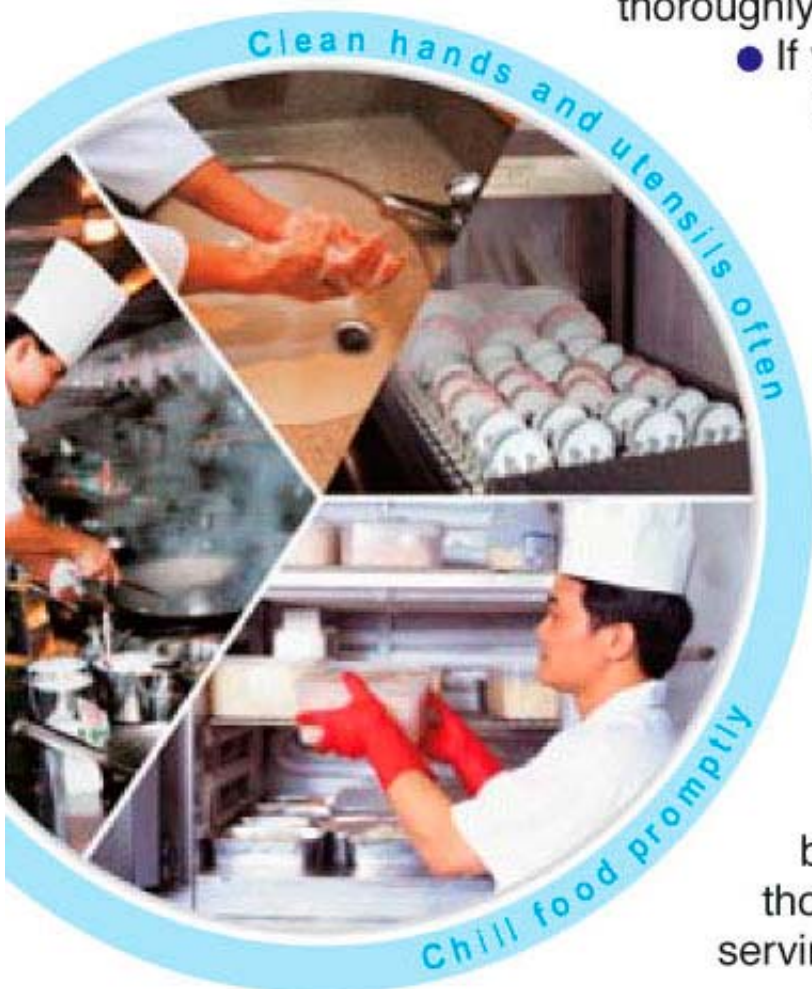
Advice to the public

- The public should patronise licensed and reputable food premises, especially when eating high risk food like raw oysters.
 - All foods, in particular shellfish, should be cooked thoroughly before consumption.

- If vegetables are eaten raw or for salad preparation, they must be thoroughly washed and well covered in refrigerators at 4°C or below.

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet, before handling food or before eating.

- Travellers visiting places appeared to have polluted water are advised to drink pasteurised milk or bottled beverages without ice and eat thoroughly cooked food while serving hot.



Advice to the trade

- All foods, especially shellfish, should be purchased from reliable and reputable suppliers.
- Importers are strongly encouraged to obtain health certificates issued by the health authority of the country of origin to certify the foods concerned are fit for human consumption.
- Food handlers with symptoms of vomiting or diarrhoea should not handle food until they are symptom-free for at least two days.

For further information,
please contact the Communication Resource Unit of the
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department.
Address: 8/F, Fa Yuen Street Municipal Services Building,
123A Fa Yuen Street, Mong Kok, Kowloon

Tel: 2381 6096

FOOD AND ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE DEPARTMENT

Enquiry Hotline : 2868 0000
Email : enquiries@fehd.gov.hk
Website : www.fehd.gov.hk