

Prevent Norovirus (Stomach Bug) Infection

Several outbreaks of norovirus (stomach bug) have occurred on the Appalachian Trail in recent years.

Help prevent one in 2017!

Proper hygiene—especially hand washing with soap and water—is key to preventing the spread of the disease. (Hand sanitizers may not be effective against norovirus.) Also, be aware that *most water filters do not filter viruses*.

Please be informed! Read the following information carefully.

Noroviruses (Stomach Bug) can cause people to have gastroenteritis, an inflammation of the stomach and the intestines. Illness often begins suddenly and lasts about 1 to 2 days.

Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected people and on infected surfaces that have been touched by ill people. Outbreaks are more likely in areas with multiple people in small spaces, such as shelters and hostels.

Common symptoms: vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping.

Less common symptoms: low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, nausea, and tiredness.

How noroviruses (stomach bugs) are spread:

- By eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus (untreated water sources can be contaminated).
- By touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes. *Norovirus can stay on surfaces and objects and still infect people after days or weeks.*
- By not washing hands after using the bathroom and before eating or preparing food.

Prevent getting and spreading norovirus (stomach bug) through good hygiene practices:

- Wash hands with soap and water often, especially after using the bathroom and before handling food or eating. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not as effective against norovirus, but may be used if soap and water are not available. Use biodegradable soap at least 200 feet (80 steps) from a water source.
- Boil water (rolling boil for at least 1 minute) or use chemical disinfectant (iodine, chlorine, or chlorine dioxide). Most filters do not remove viruses, but can be used effectively in combination with chemical disinfection against a broad range of pathogens.
- Bury human waste 8 inches deep in soil and at least 200 feet away from natural water if privy is not available.
- Avoid sharing water bottles, eating utensils, and other personal items.

What to do if you get norovirus (stomach bug):

- Drink plenty of fluids and wash hands often.
- Seek medical treatment, especially if you become dehydrated or illness lasts more than a few days (norovirus usually last 1-2 days).
- Avoid contamination of common areas (e.g., shelters); consider camping or staying off the A.T. if possible.
- Limit contact with others and avoid preparing food and drinks for others for 2-3 days after recovery.

Please report date and location of any cases or outbreaks of vomiting and diarrhea on the A.T. or at places used by A.T. hikers (e.g. hostels) to the local health department and ATC at stomachbug@appalachiantrail.org. Your prompt report will help stop potential outbreaks. Thank you!