

CLEAN UP

People who have norovirus are extremely contagious. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), infected people can shed billions of norovirus particles—and it only takes 18 to make someone else sick. People are most contagious when they are sick with the virus, and in the first few days of recovery. So if someone is sick enough to have vomiting or diarrhea in an operation, it is imperative that it's cleaned quickly and correctly.

Follow these steps to correctly clean up after someone gets sick in an operation:

Dispose of exposed food. Any food that has potentially been exposed to norovirus should be disposed of immediately. The risk of contamination to employees and customers is simply too great.

Wear protective clothing. Any employee charged with cleaning an area where vomiting or diarrhea has taken place should wear personal protective equipment, such as disposable masks, nonabsorbent disposable gloves, eye protection, and disposable aprons.

Clean, sanitize, then disinfect as appropriate. Areas where vomiting or diarrhea have taken place must be cleaned and disinfected. First, vomit and diarrhea should be covered with paper towels to minimize the risk of airborne norovirus particles. A biohazard spill kit should then be used to clean it up. If such a kit isn't available, the vomit or diarrhea should be wiped up with additional paper towels that have been saturated with a disinfecting agent. On carpets or upholstery, a biohazard cleanup kit should be used to absorb liquid. If one is not available, kitty litter or baking soda may be used instead.

The surfaces that touched the vomit or diarrhea, as well as nearby surfaces that are frequently touched (such as doorknobs) should then be washed with soapy water, rinsed with plain water, and dried with paper towels. After being cleaned, those surfaces should be properly sanitized with a sanitizing solution. All of those surfaces should then be disinfected, either with a product approved by the EPA as effective against norovirus, following the labeled directions or with a chlorine bleach solution with a concentration of 1000–5000 ppm **(5–25 tablespoons of household bleach [5.25%] per gallon of water)**. The surfaces should be left wet for at least five minutes. Steam cleaning may be preferable for carpets or upholstery.

If any clothing or fabric has touched vomit or diarrhea, it should be washed with detergent, hot water, and bleach (if recommended/possible—bleach might not be usable on some colored fabrics) on the longest wash cycle possible, then machine-dried. If vomit or diarrhea has touched the clothing of any employees, those employees should be sent home immediately. They should shower thoroughly and wash the affected clothing—again, with detergent, hot water, and bleach on the longest wash cycle possible, then machine-dried—before returning to work.