

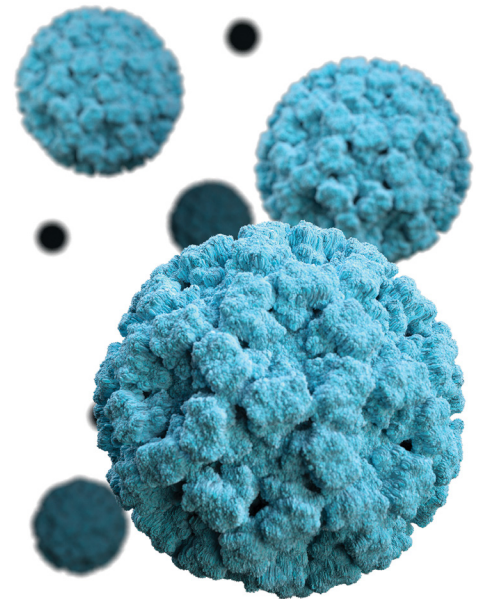
FDA FACT SHEET

Risk Assessment of Norovirus Transmission in Food Establishments

Background

Norovirus remains the leading cause of foodborne illnesses. Most of these illnesses can be traced back to food contaminated from feces or vomit from soiled hands of infected food employees in the retail food establishment (or restaurant) setting.

FDA developed a quantitative risk assessment to examine the risk of norovirus transmission from infected food employees to ready-to-eat (RTE) food and to consumers during food preparation, and to evaluate the impact of various control measures. Control measures studied included: not allowing sick employees with symptoms of vomiting and/or diarrhea to come to work; requiring employees to stay home from work for 24-48 hours after symptoms go away; requiring that employees wash their hands when soiled; limiting hand-contact with faucets and door handles in restrooms; and requiring “no bare hand contact” with RTE foods. The agency also studied the impact of employee compliance with these control measures, many of which are found in the FDA Food Code, a model uniform system of provisions that represents FDA’s guidance to ensure that food from restaurants is safe to eat. Employee compliance with current Food Code controls is important in the overall control of norovirus.



Key Findings

Focusing on improving compliance with the exclusion of food employees with vomiting and/or diarrhea when symptoms first appear can have a greater impact on reducing the transmission of norovirus than focusing on the amount of time an ill food employee is excluded after their symptoms have resolved.

Improving compliance with other interventions described in the Food Code, especially those regarding handwashing, no bare hand contact with RTE foods, glove usage, and cleaning and sanitizing of food-contact surfaces was also found to reduce norovirus transmission in food establishments.

Improving handwashing efficacy and limiting hand contact in restrooms were also found to be effective control measures in reducing the transmission of norovirus to RTE food and consumers.

For More Information

A copy of the full article is available via open access at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/risa.12758/epdf>

The FDA Food Code is available at: <http://www.fda.gov/FoodCode>

Send questions to the OAO/DRDA/Risk Analysis Branch at: FDAFoodSafetyRiskModel@fda.hhs.gov
or the Retail Food Policy Team at: RetailFoodPolicyTeam@fda.hhs.gov