

Call to Action for Industry: Using Food Safety Management Systems to Reduce norovirus

What did the 2017-2018 Restaurant data collection find out about Food Safety Management Systems?

The 2017-2018 restaurant data collection of the National Retail Risk Factor Study found that Food Safety Management Systems (FSMS) were the strongest predictor of the compliance status of risk factors. A FSMS refers to a specific set of actions and or procedures to help achieve active managerial control. While FSMS vary across the retail and food service industry, the consistent components include the purposeful implementation of procedures, training, and monitoring. [You can find more information on FSMS here.](#)

Prevention strategies for norovirus are centered on preventing viral contamination and transmission, however there is currently no single effective strategy for preventing foodborne norovirus in food establishments. This is why the FDA Food Code recommends the use of a combination of prevention strategies, and why the development of FSMS to systematically reduce the risk of norovirus is so important.

Our study observed that as FSMS development and documentation improves, personal hygiene, and protection from contamination improves. Our study also observed that employee health policies fell short in several areas that could benefit from developing FSMS to address employee health.

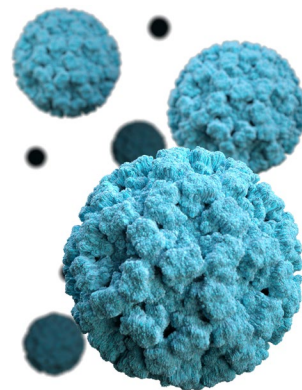
See www.fda.gov/retailfoodriskfactorstudy for more information and complete results of our data collection.

What is norovirus and why is controlling it important?

Norovirus is the leading cause of foodborne illness in the United States, [accounting for roughly 52%](#) of all foodborne illness cases. The CDC estimates 19-21 million cases of gastroenteritis are caused by norovirus each year. These cases in turn cause 109,000 hospitalizations and 900 deaths.

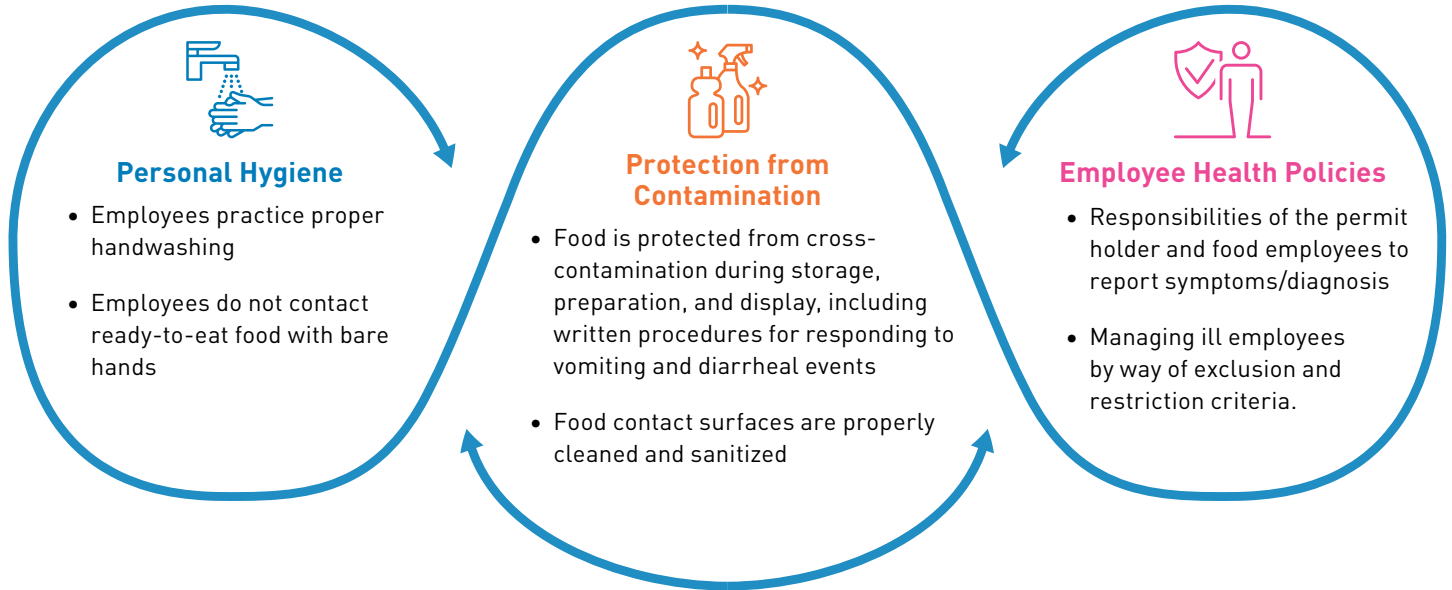
Norovirus infections spread very rapidly. Those infected are contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill through the beginning of recovery. Norovirus can spread by:

- having direct contact with an infected person,
- eating or drinking foods or liquids contaminated with the virus,
- touching objects with norovirus particles on them and then putting contaminated fingers into the mouth,
- or sharing utensils with infected persons.



What does the FDA Food Code outline as norovirus prevention strategies?

The National Retail Food Risk Factor Study is based on the intervention strategies to reduce foodborne illness risk factors outlined in the Food Code. The Food Code targets prevention of norovirus by addressing the following:



What can the retail food industry do to improve FSMS and reduce norovirus?

FSMS are a promising practice to reduce foodborne illness risk factors. The National Retail Risk Factor Study categorized FSMS into four categories: non-existent, underdeveloped, well-developed, and well-developed and documented. Well-developed and documented systems have the greatest impact on compliance. These FSMS are complete, consistent, and primarily written. Maintaining documentation of the FSMS can be vital to its success.

Restaurants should develop, implement, and strengthen their procedures, training, and monitoring within their establishment to create well-developed and documented FSMS to address norovirus. The three focus areas for these FSMS should include: personal hygiene, protection from contamination, and employee health.

A well-developed and documented FSMS for the three major focus areas should result in employees and management being able to complete the actions below. Resources on how to develop procedures, training, and monitoring are in the resources section of this document.



Procedures

- Management should be able to:
 - Describe critical steps in the food preparation process where the three focus areas are addressed.
 - Identify how and when steps/tasks are performed to ensure that the identified critical steps or points in the food preparation process are achieved

- Identify specific employees responsible for correctly performing the critical steps in the food preparation process
- Produce written materials (SOPs; posters; wall charts; wallet cards; etc.) that support the implementation of the critical steps in the food preparation process.
- Identify key requirements for food employees to report, and management to exclude or restrict ill food employees.



Training

- Management should be able to:
 - Confirm that the critical steps are included in the establishment's training program.
 - Describe how and when employees are trained on the critical steps in the food preparation process.
 - Identify specific employees who are responsible to train employees on the critical steps in the food preparation process.
 - provide written materials (PowerPoint presentations; videos; handouts; course books or policy manuals; reminder cards; wall charts; posters; etc.) to support training methods.
 - Train employees on the employee health policy, including regularly reviewing responsibilities with the food employees.



Monitoring

- Management should be able to:
 - Confirm that they observe employees perform critical steps in food preparation are included in the establishment's monitoring program.
 - Describe how and when they observe critical steps or in the food preparation process to ensure food employees are following the establishment's procedures.
 - Identify specific employees who are responsible to monitor critical steps in the food preparation process.
 - Describe corrective actions taken when critical steps in the food preparation process are skipped or applied improperly.
 - Produce written forms/records/logs/checklists etc., used to document monitoring of critical steps in the food preparation process within their establishment.
 - Monitor food employees for symptoms, interview food employees regarding their health status, and enforce exclusions and restrictions as needed.

Resources

[The FDA Food Code](#) is the primary resource for compliance and enforcement of food safety provisions, and guidance for the reduction of Norovirus in retail food establishments. Below is a list of links to specific parts in the Food Code and its annexes to assist regulatory authorities in this effort to control norovirus at retail and foster FSMS. The annexes are provided specifically to assist the regulatory authority to apply the provisions of the Food Code uniformly and effectively. These resources can provide tremendous assistance to those charged with applying Food Code provisions.

Part 2-2 Employee Health

Part 2-3 Personal Cleanliness

Part 2-4 Hygienic Practices

Part 2-5 Responding to Contamination Events

Part 3-3 Protection from Contamination After Receiving

Food Code Annex 7, Form 1-B Conditional Employee or Food Employee Reporting Agreement

Below is a list of other federal resources available that can be used to assist in the development of FSMS in restaurants. We encourage establishments to utilize and share these and other available resources to make progress towards the prevention of foodborne illness risk factors.

- [Employee Health and Personal Hygiene Handbook](#)
- [Managing Food Safety: A Manual for the Voluntary Use of HACCP Principles for Operators of Food Service and Retail Establishments](#)
- [FDA Bad Bug Book](#)
- [Foodborne Illness Video Testimonials \(Norovirus\)](#)
- [Foodborne Illness Posters](#)
- [Risk Assessment of Norovirus Transmission in Food Establishments](#)
- [Norovirus Outbreaks and Restaurant Practices | NEARS | EHS | CDC](#)
- [Preventing Norovirus Outbreaks | VitalSigns | CDC](#)
- [Adoption of Food Code Linked to Lower Rates of Norovirus | EHS | CDC](#)
- [Can Restaurant Managers Talk with Sick Workers? | EHS | CDC](#)
- [Restaurants Can Manage Sick Workers to Help Prevent Outbreaks | EHS-Net | EHS | CDC](#)
- [Infographic Kitchen Manager Certification | EHS | CDC](#)

Questions?

For more information visit our website at: <http://www.fda.gov/RetailFoodProtection>