

Food handlers and norovirus transmission: Social science insights

Area of research interest: [Behaviour and perception](#)

Key findings

The literature review identified 5 strategies for controlling norovirus:

- Personal hygiene
- Food handling
- Washing and cooking food
- Surface and uniform cleaning
- Fitness to work

Visits to food catering establishments involved in-depth interviews, surveys, and structured environmental and behavioural observations.

Strongest evidence was found for:

- inadequate hand washing;
- not washing hands before gloving;
- using bare hands when preparing food;
- not regularly changing gloves;
- food handlers instead of trained staff cleaning areas where people vomited;
- not washing uniform correctly;
- and returning to work too early after being ill.

Data analysis and behavioural theories were used to rank behaviours which risk spreading Norovirus in relation to the control strategies, according to the strength of evidence that food handlers were expressing these behaviours.

Next steps

Several behavioural interventions were recommended based on the findings. Just as one example: strong evidence indicated inadequate knowledge of how to stop Norovirus spreading, so educational training for food handlers was highly recommended. Our organisation is exploring the design and delivery of future interventions.

Research report

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

[View Food handlers and Norovirus transmission: Executive summary as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (507.22 KB)

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

[View Food handlers and Norovirus transmission: Report as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (830.66 KB)

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

[View Food handlers and Norovirus transmission: Annex as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (1.68 MB)