



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY

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www.sloPublicHealth.org/Lab

LABORATORY TEST FACT SHEET

TEST: NOROVIRUS RT-PCR

ORDER CODE: 6100

TEST DESCRIPTION

Norovirus (previously called Norwalk Virus) is the most common cause of acute gastroenteritis (inflammation of the stomach and intestines that causes vomiting and/or diarrhea) in the United States, and the most common cause of foodborne disease.

Norovirus is highly contagious. It spreads through person-to-person contact and contaminated food, water, and surfaces. People can get norovirus illness throughout the year, but cases typically peak between December and February.

The best way to help prevent norovirus is to practice proper hand washing and general cleanliness.

Norovirus can be found in stool (feces) before symptoms occur and it is shed in stool for up to 2-3 weeks after symptoms. Persons are most infectious when ill with the virus and during the first few days after symptoms have subsided.

The County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory performs a real time, reverse-transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test for detection of the Norovirus in feces. Related viruses, such as sapoviruses and astroviruses, are not detected by this assay.

Sensitivity and Specificity

- Sensitivity: 95–98%
- Specificity: 98–100%

SPECIMENS ACCEPTED FOR TESTING

1. Bulk liquid stool specimens collected in a plain sterile container during acute phase (48-72 hours of illness). Specimens should be placed in sealed, leak-proof bag.
2. Stools are accepted up to 7–10 days after onset.

Norovirus is highly contagious, use Universal Precautions when handling the specimen.

Storage and Transport temperature: Specimens should be individually stored and transported at refrigerated temperature (4 °C).

CPT code: 87798