Food Safety Hazard: Norovirus

**Characteristics/description**
Norovirus is a group of related RNA viruses that cause gastroenteritis in humans. They are relatively resistant to heat and can survive temperatures as high as 140°F and the quick steaming processes that are often used for cooking shellfish.

**Source**
Noroviruses can easily be spread through contact with an infected person, contaminated food or water, or contaminated surfaces.

**Effects on humans**
The virus causes inflammation of the stomach or intestines or both (acute gastroenteritis). This inflammation leads to the sudden onset of stomach pain, nausea and vomiting, and diarrhea.

**Incubation**
Infected people may shed and thus transmit the virus before they show signs of disease. A person usually develops symptoms 12 to 48 hours after being exposed to norovirus. Most people with norovirus illness get better within 1-3 days.

**Treatment for patients**
Supportive therapy to include fluid and electrolyte replacement.

**Risk reduction strategies**
- Preventive measures include practicing proper hand hygiene, washing fruits and vegetables, and cooking seafood thoroughly. People with norovirus illness should not prepare food or care for others.
- Surfaces should be washed and decontaminated; soiled clothes and linens should be washed immediately and thoroughly.
- Gloves should be worn during cleaning and hands washed thoroughly after gloves are removed.

**Key links**

