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Cause of St. Charles stomach virus confirmed as norovirus

The Kane County Health Department is advising that the Illinois Department of Public Health's (IDPH) laboratory analysis confirmed that the outbreak of the stomach virus that caused St. Charles East High School to cancel classes two days last week was caused by norovirus.

In its investigation, the Health Department was able to collect three samples for testing, which were sent to the IDPH Virology laboratory in Chicago. In all three specimens, Norovirus Subtype G2 RNA was detected.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), symptoms of a norovirus infection include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and stomach pain. Norovirus is typically spread through vomit and stool. People become sick by eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus, by touching surfaces or objects contaminated with the virus, and then putting their fingers to their mouth, or by caring for or sharing food or eating utensils with a sick person. Most people who are sick from norovirus get better in one to three days.

Tips for preventing norovirus include:

- Wash hands carefully with soap and water, especially after using the toilet or changing diapers, and always before eating, preparing or handling food. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can help reduce the number of germs, but they're not a substitute for washing with soap and water.
- Thoroughly wash fruits and vegetables and cook seafood.
- If sick, don't prepare food or care for others who are sick for at least two days after symptoms stop.
- Clean and disinfect potentially contaminated surfaces.
- Immediately remove and wash clothes or linens that may be contaminated with vomit or stool.

There is no specific medicine to treat the illness. To prevent dehydration, drink plenty of liquids to replace fluids lost from throwing up and diarrhea. Severe dehydration may require hospitalization for treatment with intravenous fluids.

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