

Increased Norovirus Statewide

Summary and Action Items

- Norovirus outbreaks occur year-round but are most commonly reported between November and April.
- Health care providers should alert local health departments of people with gastrointestinal diseases associated with groups or events with other people with similar symptoms.
- Long-term care facilities should report all outbreaks of acute gastroenteritis (due to norovirus or other etiologies), which are defined as two or more cases occurring in a unit with initial dates of onset within 48 hours of each other.
- Health care providers and food handlers who have, or suspect they may have norovirus should not return to work until vomiting and diarrhea have ceased for 48 hours.
- Persons suspected to have norovirus should not return to school or day care until diarrhea, vomiting, and fever have ceased for at least 24 hours.

Background

IDPH is seeing an increase in the number of norovirus outbreaks reported in many settings. Anyone can get sick with norovirus which spreads easily, especially in congregate settings.

Symptoms

A person usually develops symptoms 12 to 48 hours after being exposed to norovirus.

- Most common symptoms: Diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, and stomach pain.
- Other symptoms: Fever, headache, and body aches.

Transmission

Norovirus spreads easily and quickly in different ways. You can get norovirus by:

- Having direct contact with someone with norovirus, like caring for them, sharing food or eating utensils with them, or eating food handled by them.
- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus.
- Touching contaminated objects or surfaces and then putting your unwashed fingers in your mouth.

You can still spread norovirus for two weeks or more after you feel better.

Diagnosis

Norovirus infection is often diagnosed based on clinical suspicion. It can be confirmed by detecting viral antigen or viral RNA in stool or vomitus. Diagnostic tests are available at many clinical laboratories.

Prevention

Proper hand hygiene practices are the best way to prevent the transmission of norovirus. Hands should be washed with warm water and soap. Hand sanitizer alone is insufficient to kill norovirus and is not a substitute for handwashing. People with norovirus should not work in sensitive occupations (i.e., day care providers and food handlers) until 48 hours after vomiting and diarrhea have resolved. Persons with vomiting or diarrhea believed to be infectious, including norovirus, should not attend school or day care while acute symptoms are present. Promptly cleaning up vomit or diarrhea can assist with

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decreasing transmission. Affected areas should be cleaned with a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved disinfectant or a freshly prepared sodium hypochlorite solution (commonly known as bleach).

IDPH and LHD Response

Health care providers should notify local health departments of suspected or confirmed outbreaks of acute gastroenteritis as soon as possible. Providers should also remind staff who work in sensitive occupations not to return to work until vomiting and diarrhea have resolved for 48 hours.

Long-Term Care Facilities (LTCFs) should place patients with symptoms consistent with norovirus on contact precautions for a minimum of 48 hours and, if possible, in a single occupancy room. When patients with suspected/confirmed norovirus cannot be accommodated in single occupancy rooms, efforts should be made to separate them from asymptomatic patients. Depending upon facility characteristics, approaches for cohorting patients during outbreaks may include placing patients in multi-occupancy rooms or designating patient care areas or contiguous sections within a facility for patient cohorts.

An outbreak of acute gastroenteritis (due to norovirus or other etiologies) in a long-term care facility is defined as two or more cases occurring in a unit with initial onset dates within 48 hours of each other. Outbreaks in LTCFs should be reported to the local health department within 24 hours.

Local health departments are asked to share this information with schools, day care facilities, licensed food establishments, and other facilities that may be impacted in their jurisdiction. Local health departments should investigate and report outbreaks to IDPH by entering the outbreak into the IDPH Outbreak Reporting System (ORS).

Additional Resources

[CDC Norovirus Website](#)

[IDPH Norovirus Website](#)

[IDPH Control of Communicable Disease Code](#)

[Norovirus Fact Sheet for Food Workers](#)

[CDC Norovirus Prevention and control in Healthcare Settings](#)

Contact

Clinicians should contact their [local health department](#) to identify prevention resources and to report cases.

For infection control guidance or assistance with outbreak response in congregate facilities (including long-term care), contact your local health department, regional infection control coordinator, or the Regional Infection Prevention Program: DPH.IP@illinois.gov.

Target Audience

Local health departments, infectious disease physicians, family practice and internal medicine physicians, pediatricians, geriatric physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, hospital emergency departments, infection control preventionists, long-term care and assisted living facilities, congregate care facilities, shelters, and laboratories

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