

Norovirus

General & Outbreak Recommendations

School and Workplace Recommendations:

General:

- Staff, students, or visitors with norovirus infection who have diarrhea should remain at home until 24 hours after diarrhea and/or vomiting cease, and until stools are formed. Education on proper hand hygiene should be emphasized upon return to work or school.
- Educate all students and staff on proper hand washing technique: Hand washing should be done using warm water and soap. Rub hands together for at least 15 seconds making sure to scrub the backs of hands, wrists, between fingers and under fingernails. Rinse well under warm water and use a paper towel or blow dryer to dry your hands.
- Food service workers, should not return to food handling duties for three days following cessation of diarrhea and/or vomiting, and until stools are formed.
- Students and staff who become ill while at school or the workplace should be sent home immediately.
- There has been uncertainty over the effectiveness of alcohol based hand gels against norovirus. IDPH always recommends washing hands. Alcohol based hand gels should only be used in situations where soap and warm water may not be available.

Outbreak:

- Consider sending a letter home with students for parents that provides basic information on norovirus and recommendations on how they can help prevent spread of the disease. Refer to the sample IDPH *Parent Letter for School Norovirus Outbreaks*.
- Increase frequency of routine cleaning. Examples of areas to disinfect include: doorknobs, fountains, sinks, toilets, phones, counters, desks, handrails, and light switches. Toys should be cleaned and disinfected daily. Refer to IDPH *Norovirus Environmental Cleaning Fact Sheet* for appropriate cleaning methods.
- Temporarily stop using self-service foods for school breakfast/lunch.
- Ensure restrooms are adequately stocked with soap, paper towels, and warm running water.
- To determine and confirm the cause of the outbreak, local public health agencies may request stool specimens from some of the ill individuals.

Childcare Center Recommendations:

General:

- Ill children not in diapers and child care center staff with diarrhea and/or vomiting should remain at home until 24 hours after diarrhea and/or vomiting cease, and until stools are formed. Children in diapers should remain at home for 3 days following cessation of diarrhea and/or vomiting and until stools are formed.
- Education on proper hand hygiene should be emphasized upon return to the childcare center.
- Child care center staff that handle food should remain at home for 3 days following cessation of diarrhea and/or vomiting and until stools are formed.
- Proper hand washing technique: Hand washing should be done using warm water and soap. Rub hands together for at least 15 seconds making sure to scrub the backs of hands, wrists, between fingers and under fingernails. Rinse well under warm water and use a paper towel or blow dryer to dry your hands.

Iowa Department of Public Health

- There has been uncertainty over the effectiveness of alcohol based hand gels against norovirus. IDPH always recommends washing hands. Alcohol based hand gels should only be used in situations where soap and warm water may not be available.

Outbreak:

- Cohorting of ill and well children may be indicated in certain circumstances. LPHA or IDPH should be contacted to provide assistance in these situations.
- Consider sending a letter home with children for parents that provides basic information on norovirus and recommendations on how they can help prevent spread of the disease. Refer to the sample IDPH *Parent Letter for Child care Center Norovirus Outbreaks*.
- Increase frequency of routine cleaning. Examples of areas to disinfect include: doorknobs, fountains, sinks, toilets, phones, counters, desks, handrails, and light switches. Toys should be cleaned and disinfected daily. Refer to IDPH *Norovirus Environmental Cleaning Fact Sheet* for appropriate cleaning methods.
- Ensure restrooms are adequately stocked with soap, paper towels, and warm running water.
- To determine and confirm the cause of the outbreak, local public health agencies may request stool specimens from some ill children and staff.

Hospital and Long-term Care Facility Recommendations:

Patient/resident recommendations:

General:

- Place ill patients in private rooms or in the same room or wing as other ill patients. Minimize movement of residents.
- Consider stopping all group activities (dining halls, activity rooms, etc.) until outbreak has resolved.
- Consider serving meals in resident rooms versus the dining hall.

Staff recommendations:

General:

- Ill staff that provide direct patient care, including food service workers should remain at home for 3 days following cessation of diarrhea and/or vomiting, and until stools are formed. Education on proper hand hygiene should be emphasized upon return to work.
- Staff that do not provide direct patient care should remain at home for at least 24 hours following cessation of diarrhea and/or vomiting, and until stools are formed. Education on proper hand hygiene should be emphasized upon return to work.
- Staff should wash their hands when entering and leaving every resident room.
- Patients with suspected norovirus infection should be managed with standard and contact precautions with careful attention to hand hygiene practices.
- Contact precautions should be used when caring for diapered or incontinent persons, during outbreaks in a facility, and when a splash could occur.
- Persons cleaning areas heavily contaminated with vomitus or feces should wear surgical masks.
- Staff should be assigned to work with well residents or sick residents, but should not care for both groups. Staff who go back and forth between ill and well residents, play an important role in transmitting the virus from resident to resident. To the extent possible, keep staff from "floating" between floors/units.

Iowa Department of Public Health

- Food handlers who are ill with gastrointestinal symptoms MUST NOT prepare or serve food under any circumstances. It is strongly recommended that symptomatic food handling staff be sent home immediately. There has been uncertainty over the effectiveness of alcohol based hand gels against norovirus. IDPH always recommends washing hands. Alcohol based hand gels should only be used in situations where soap and warm water may not be available.

Outbreak:

- Limit staff from moving between affected and unaffected units and limit any nonessential personnel from affected units.

Facility Recommendations:

General:

- Medical equipment used for care of norovirus infected patients, should be either dedicated to that room for the duration of isolation or be thoroughly disinfected upon removal from the room. Selection of appropriate cleaning agent should be consistent with the equipment manufacturer's recommendation for compatibility.
- Refer to IDPH *Norovirus Environmental Cleaning Fact Sheet* for appropriate cleaning methods.

Outbreak:

- Consider limiting new admissions to the affected units until the incidence of new ill cases has reached zero.
- Inform visitors about a possible disease outbreak in your facility.
- Consider limiting or stopping visitation to the facility until there have been no new cases for at least 48 hours.
- Post extra hand washing signs in various visible areas in the facility.
- It may be useful to collect stool specimens from residents/patients to confirm norovirus is the cause of the outbreak.