



PROVIDER AND HEALTH CARE FACILITY GUIDANCE FOR REPORTING AND HANDLING NOROVIRUS OUTBREAKS

TO: West Virginia Local Health Departments, Health Care Providers, Health Care Facilities, and Other Health Partners

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LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS, HEALTH CARE FACILITIES AND OTHER HEALTH PARTNERS.

With the arrival of cooler weather, there has been a substantial increase in the number of outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness in the community and healthcare facilities. Many of these outbreaks have been caused by a group of viruses called noroviruses.

To help facilities deal with these outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness, a “toolkit” has been developed which includes information regarding the reporting and handling of these outbreaks as well as control measures which can be implemented. This “toolkit” can be found on the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Program website (www.wvdhhr.org/idep)

The symptoms of illness with a norovirus are sudden onset of vomiting, watery non-bloody diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and nausea. Low-grade fever occurs occasionally, and vomiting is more common in children. The usual duration of illness is 24 to 60 hours and recovery is the norm. Dehydration is the most common complication, usually in the young and elderly.

Symptoms usually begin 24 to 48 hours after exposure. Noroviruses are highly contagious and are spread easily from person to person. Both stool and vomit are infectious. These viruses can survive freezing and heating to 60°C (140°F). In healthcare facilities, the transmission of the virus can occur through hand transfer of the virus to the oral mucosa following contact with surfaces that have been contaminated with either feces or vomitus.

Persons infected with the virus are contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill to at least 3 days after recovery. Some may be contagious for as long as 2 weeks after recovery. Persons affected do not develop long-term immunity and therefore can become infected with the virus again.

Since the illness is caused by a virus, there is no treatment other than keeping the patient well hydrated.

For further information visit the IDEP website at <http://www.wvdhhr.org/idep/a-z/a-z-norwalk.asp> or contact IDEP at 304-558-5358 or 800-423-1271 (in WV).

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/gastro/norovirus.htm>

Reporting of outbreaks, including outbreaks of Norovirus is required by law from hospitals, health care providers, schools and camps (64CSR7-3.3.b.6). Report outbreaks immediately to your local health department.

This message was directly distributed by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health to Local Health Departments and Professional Societies. Receiving entities are responsible for further disseminating the information to the targeted audiences noted.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance, warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation. May not require immediate action.

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