Guidelines for Suspected Norovirus Outbreaks in Healthcare Facilities

Define the outbreak...
Case Definition: 2 or more episodes of vomiting or 3 or more episodes of diarrhea in a 24 hour period
Outbreak Definition: Onset of 2 or more cases within a 3 day period

When you have an outbreak...
1. Begin a line listing of ill persons (including staff and residents)
   - Complete for the duration of the outbreak (until you have no new cases for 48 hours)
   - Use the line listing to track the progress of the outbreak and to adjust your control measures.
   - An example can be found at following website: (http://www.wvidep.org/Portals/31/PDFs/IDEP/norovirus/Nursing_Home_GI_outbreak_linelist.xls)
2. Implement appropriate control measures (see below)
3. Report the outbreak to your local health department and stay in touch throughout the outbreak.
4. Collect specimens
   - If you collect specimens, we recommend collecting 5-10 stool specimens from recently ill persons. Information on collection and shipment can be found on the Office of Laboratory Services website. (http://www.wvdhhr.org/labservices/shared/docs/Micro/Collection_and_Transport_Guidelines_for_Noroviruses.pdf)

To help control the spread of infection...
1. Practice good hand hygiene. Promote adherence among healthcare personnel, patients and visitors
   - Wash hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water
   - Ensure individuals wash hands before eating or drinking, after going to the bathroom, or after contact with an ill patient
2. Place patients on Contact Precautions for a minimum of 48 hours after resolution of symptoms
3. Cases should be placed in a private room when possible. If not possible, cohort ills and separate them from asymptomatic patients.
4. Minimize patient movements within a ward or unit
   - Consider restricting symptomatic and recovering patients from leaving the patient care area unless for essential care/treatment
   - Suspend group activities for the duration of the outbreak
5. Consider the closure of affected wards to new admissions or transfers.
6. Exclude ill personnel from work for a minimum of 48 hours after resolution of symptoms. Establish protocols for staff cohorting.
   - Staff who have recovered from recent infection may be best suited to care for symptomatic patients until outbreak resolves.
7. Increase frequency of cleaning/disinfection of patient care areas and high touch surfaces with commercial cleaning and disinfections products registered with the US Environmental Protection Agency as effective against Norovirus. (See Environmental Cleaning Attachment for more details)
8. Establish visitor policies for outbreaks and ensure that visitors comply with hand hygiene and Contact Precautions.

REMEMBER: Outbreaks are immediately reportable to your local health department!
For further questions or information contact the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Division at 304-558-5358 or 800-423-1271

Guideline for the Prevention and Control of Norovirus Gastroenteritis Outbreaks in Healthcare Settings. 2011. CDC/HICPAC