



HEALTH ADVISORY

Increased Norovirus Activity in School Settings

May 26, 2017

SITUATION

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) released a press statement on 5/23/17 regarding increases in reported norovirus outbreaks statewide, especially in schools, attributed to a new strain of the virus that has been circulating in Europe and Asia since last year and is now in the US and CA. Consistent with what's being seen statewide, **Alameda County is experiencing an unusually large proportion of reported gastrointestinal illness outbreaks among students and staff in school settings.** These illnesses are most likely caused by Norovirus which is highly contagious and the leading cause of gastrointestinal illness in the U.S. It causes symptoms of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach pain. The virus is present in both the vomit and feces of the ill person. **Most people recover within 1 to 3 days, but can continue to shed the virus in their feces for several days after their symptoms disappear.** People with norovirus should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. If they cannot keep down fluids, they may need to seek medical care. The virus spreads to people who:

- are near a vomiting person; care for the ill person;
- eat food or drink touched by an ill food handler whose hands were not thoroughly washed;
- or touch contaminated surfaces and then touch their mouth before handwashing.

Infection spreads quickly in settings where people are in close contact with each other, such as cruise ships, health care facilities, daycare centers, schools and summer camps.

The most important steps to prevent the spread of Norovirus in schools are to ensure that: 1) ill persons stay home while sick and for another 48 hours after symptoms go away; 2) everyone regularly washes hands especially after using the bathroom and before eating; and 3) contaminated and frequently-touched objects and surfaces are thoroughly and frequently cleaned with an approved disinfectant, as Norovirus can survive for many days on surfaces. Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) encourages all school and childcare personnel and families with children who attend these settings to take the following steps to prevent the spread of Norovirus.

ACTIONS REQUESTED:

1. **REQUIRE** students, teachers, and school staff to stay home if they become ill with symptoms such as stomach pain, fever, nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea. Ill individuals should stay home for 48 hours after symptoms are gone. Even though people feel better, they can still shed the virus and infect other people.
2. **PROMOTE** proper handwashing throughout the day with soap and water:
<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>.
3. **DISINFECT** possibly contaminated surfaces at least 2 times daily and immediately after a vomiting episode or fecal accident. Use a bleach solution to disinfect during outbreaks if possible; otherwise, use an EPA-approved disinfectant effective against Norovirus: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-g-epas-registered-antimicrobial-products-effective-against-norovirus>
4. **ENSURE** ill people do not prepare food and drink for others. During outbreaks, do not allow staff or students to serve themselves unpackaged food, snacks or drinks.
5. **REPORT SUSPECTED gastrointestinal outbreaks** to Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) immediately by phone at (510) 267-3250 M-F, 8:30 am-5 pm. ACPHD will provide additional guidance
6. **DISTRIBUTE** CDPH Norovirus fact sheet to students, staff and parents:
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/NorovirusFactSheet.pdf>
7. **MAINTAIN** these actions throughout any after school activities or summer camps hosted by the school

RESOURCES:

CDC prevent norovirus page: <https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/preventing-infection.html>