



Health, Housing & Community Services Department
Public Health Division
(510) 981-5300

Dr. Robert Benjamin, MD, MPH
Health Officer

Health Advisory

May 24th, 2017

Norovirus

Please distribute to all providers in your practice

Current Situation

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is working with local public health departments across the state to help control norovirus outbreaks that have increased in the past few weeks, and are occurring in schools and other institutional settings. Norovirus activity is seasonal and typically peaks in late winter or spring each year. A peak in May is somewhat later than usual.

Norovirus Information:

People with norovirus are very contagious and can easily spread the illness from person to person. The virus may be found in both stool and vomit and ill persons can still be contagious up to two weeks or more after recovery. People can become infected in several ways, including: having direct contact with another person who is infected, eating food or drinking liquids contaminated with norovirus, or touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching your mouth.

Symptoms:

- Usually begin 12 to 48 hours after the person has been exposed to the virus.
- Symptoms last for one to three days. **However, after symptoms go away, people are still highly infectious, especially the first 48 hours.**
- Common symptoms: vomiting, nausea, diarrhea and stomach cramps. Other symptoms may include low-grade fever, headache and body aches.
- Norovirus symptoms can lead to dehydration, especially in young children, older adults and people with other illnesses.

Transmission Prevention:

- It is particularly important for ill persons to practice good handwashing and to avoid preparing food for others while they are sick and for at least 48 hours after symptoms are no longer present, as to prevent norovirus from spreading. Food workers should not work while they are sick and for 48 hours after symptoms stop. Persons caring for someone who may have norovirus disease should be particularly careful about handwashing and cleaning contaminated surfaces and materials

Action Requested of Clinicians:

- Consider Norovirus in patient presenting with diarrhea, vomiting, nausea and stomach pain
- **Direct** patients with Norovirus/GI illness to **remain home from work or school until 48 hours after symptoms have resolved**, due to continued viral shedding and high infectivity.
- **Report** suspected Norovirus Outbreaks to Berkeley Public Health immediately by phone calling 510-981-5292 M-F 8:30-5:00pm or (510)-981-5911 after hours weekends or holidays.
- **Collect** stool specimens for RT-qPCR (real-time reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction) when a person has acute illness within 48 to 72 hours. PCR is the most widely used diagnostic assay for detecting norovirus. Norovirus can sometimes be found in stool specimens collected 2 weeks after a person recovers.

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Sources for Information

CDC Prevent Norovirus webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/preventing-infection.html>

CDPH Norovirus:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/NorovirusFactSheet.pdf>

City of Berkeley Public Health Division: <http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/publichealth>

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