



New Hampshire Health Alert Network

Health.Alert@nh.gov

Status: Actual
Message Type: Alert
Severity: Moderate
Sensitive: Not Sensitive
Message Identifier: NH-HAN #20120127 Norovirus Update for Schools and Childcare Settings 2012
Delivery Time: 12 hours
Acknowledgement: No
Originating Agency: NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services

DATE: January 27, 2012

TIME: 1600 EST

TO: School Nurses and Administrators, Childcare Centers, Manchester Health Department, Nashua Health Department, Health Officers, Post-Secondary Schools, MMRS, MRC, Public Health Networks EWIDS, DHHS Outbreak Team, DPHS Investigation Team, and DPHS Management Team

FROM: Sharon Alroy-Preis, MD, MPH, NH State Epidemiologist

SUBJECT: Norovirus Update for Schools and Childcare Settings 2012

NH Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) recommends:

- Increased awareness and vigilance for outbreaks of gastroenteritis in schools and childcare settings, which may be caused by norovirus
- Strict adherence to infection control practices during a suspected outbreak
- Timely reporting of all suspected outbreaks to the NH DHHS Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496 (after hours 1-800-852-3345 ext.5300)

Background:

Since December 1, 2011, NH DHHS has investigated 39 reports of gastroenteritis outbreaks, predominantly reported from healthcare facilities, though several recent reports have come from schools and childcare settings. Most of these outbreaks have a confirmed cause of norovirus, a common viral infection in the United States. Noroviruses are highly communicable and can be transmitted in a number of ways including person-to-person contact, consumption of contaminated food and water, airborne droplets of vomit, and contact with contaminated surfaces. Symptoms normally last 12-60 hours and commonly include vomiting and diarrhea. Primary symptoms may be accompanied by abdominal cramps, nausea, fever or headache, which usually resolve within 48 hours.

Infection Control Recommendations during an Outbreak:

1. Promptly clean areas contaminated with vomit and feces and follow up disinfection with freshly prepared 0.1% (1000 ppm) hypochlorite solution (5 tablespoons bleach per gallon water).
2. Review kitchen hygiene practices and health status of all food workers, exclude any symptomatic food handlers from work until 48 hours after the resolution of symptoms.
3. Assess health status of students and staff and exclude all symptomatic individuals from school/work until full recovery.
4. Practice frequent hand washing and gloving by all food workers in the facility.
5. Practice frequent hand washing by all students and staff.

6. Use gloves and aprons whenever contact with an infected individual or contaminated environment is anticipated.
7. Wash hands after contact with infected individuals, on leaving affected areas or before handling food or drinks.
8. Clean soiled carpets and soft furnishings with hot water and detergent or steam clean; avoid vacuum cleaning.
9. Clean frequently handled objects such as door handles and railings.

Visit the CDC website for additional information including a checklist for schools when an outbreak of gastroenteritis is suspected: <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Topics/norovirus.htm>

Reporting of Suspected Outbreaks:

Individual cases of norovirus are not reportable in New Hampshire unless suspected to be part of an outbreak. To report suspected outbreaks, call the Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496 (toll free at 800-852-3345, ext. 4496). After hours, call 800-852-3345, ext. 5300, and ask for the public health professional on call. The public health professional will discuss appropriate management of the suspected outbreak and provide prevention recommendations.

Attachment: Norovirus Fact Sheet

<http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/documents/norovirus.pdf>

**For any questions regarding the contents of this message, please contact
NH DHHS Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496.
For after hours / toll free, call 1-800-852-3345, ext. 4496.**

DEFINITION OF TERMS AND ALERTING VOCABULARY

Message Type

Alert: Original alert
Update: Prior alert has been updated and superseded
Cancel: Prior alert has been cancelled
Error: Prior alert has been retracted

Status

Actual: Refers to a live event
Exercise: Designated recipients must respond to the communication or alert
Test: Related to a technical and/or system test

Severity

Extreme: Extraordinary threat to life or property
Severe: Significant threat to life or property
Moderate: Possible threat to life or property
Minor: Minimal threat to life or property
Unknown: Unknown threat to life or property

Sensitive

Sensitive: Indicates the alert contains sensitive content
Not Sensitive: Indicates non-sensitive content

Message Identifier

A unique alert identifier that is generated upon alert activation

Delivery Time

Indicates the time frame for the delivery of the alert

Acknowledgement

Indicates whether an acknowledgement on the part of the recipient is required to confirm that the alert was received, and the time frame in which a response is required.

Originating Agency

A guaranteed unique identifier for the agency originating the alert.

Alerting Program

The program sending the alert or engaging in alerts and communications using PHIN Communication and Alerting (PCA) as a vehicle for their delivery.

You have received this message based upon the information contained within our emergency notification database.

If you have a different or additional e-mail or fax address that you would prefer to be used, please contact:

Denise M. Krol, MS
NH HAN Coordinator
Denise.Krol@dhhs.state.nh.us

Business Hours: 8 AM – 4 PM
Tel: 603-271-4596
Fax: 603-271-0545

Norovirus

What is norovirus?

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause the “stomach flu,” or gastrointestinal (stomach and digestive) illness. Norovirus infection occurs occasionally in only one or a few people or it can be responsible for large outbreaks, such as in long-term care facilities.

Who gets norovirus?

Norovirus infects people of all ages worldwide. It may, however, be more common in adults and older children.

How does someone get norovirus?

Norovirus is spread from person to person via feces, but some evidence suggests that the virus is spread through the air during vomiting. Good hand washing is the most important way to prevent the transmission of norovirus. Outbreaks have been linked to sick food handlers, ill health care workers, cases in facilities such as nursing homes spreading to other residents, contaminated shellfish, and water contaminated with sewage.

What are the symptoms of norovirus?

Serious illness rarely occurs. The most common symptoms include nausea, vomiting, and stomach cramps. Diarrhea may occasionally accompany vomiting. Fever is usually low grade or absent. Infected people generally recover in 1-2 days.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

The incubation period for norovirus is 1-2 days.

How is norovirus infection diagnosed?

Laboratory diagnosis is difficult but there are tests that can be performed in the New Hampshire Public Health Lab in situations where there are multiple cases. Diagnosis is often based on the combination of symptoms and the short time of the illness.

What is the treatment for norovirus infection?

No specific treatment is available. People who become dehydrated might need to be rehydrated by taking liquids by mouth. Occasionally patients may need to be hospitalized to receive intravenous fluids.

How can norovirus be prevented?

While there is no vaccine for norovirus, there are precautions people should take:

- Wash hands with soap and warm water after using the bathroom and after changing diapers
- Wash hands with soap and warm water before preparing or eating any food
- Cook all shellfish thoroughly before eating
- Wash raw vegetables before eating
- Dispose of sewage in a sanitary manner
- Food handlers with symptoms of Norovirus should not prepare or touch food
- Health care workers should stay home if they have symptoms of norovirus.

For specific concerns about norovirus, call the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496 or 800-852-3345 x4496. For further information, refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov or the NH Department of Health and Human Services website at www.dhhs.nh.gov .