



Health, Housing & Community Services Department
Public Health Division

May 26, 2017

Dear Principal,

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 is a common cause of gastrointestinal illness. This letter contains information about norovirus and outbreak prevention measures for schools, child care facilities and camps.

Norovirus Information:

People with norovirus are very contagious and can easily spread the illness from person to person due to the low infectious dose, close contact among students and staff, and potential for decreased hand hygiene among students due to age and suboptimal handwashing practices.

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.

Responding to Norovirus Outbreaks at your Facility:

- **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
- **EXCLUDE ill students:** If your facility is experiencing an outbreak, students who are ill with either vomiting or diarrhea should be excluded until they have been symptom-free for at least 48 hours.
- **EXCLUDE ill staff:** If your facility is experiencing an outbreak, ill staff, especially food handlers, should be excluded from work until at least 48 hours after diarrhea and vomiting have ceased, even if they are feeling well sooner.

Cleaning and disinfecting:

- Norovirus is very hardy and can persist in the environment. To effectively disinfect a facility, use a 10% solution of household chlorine bleach (one cup of bleach per nine cups of water) or an EPA-approved disinfectant that is effective against norovirus. A list of EPA-registered disinfectants is available at:
www.epa.gov/oppad001/chemregindex.htm

A Vibrant and Healthy Berkeley for All

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E-mail: publichealth@ci.berkeley.ca.us - <http://www.cityofberkeley.info/health/>

Ensure that the disinfectant is mixed at the proper concentration and has the proper contact time with surfaces, as indicated on the disinfectant product label or MSDS sheet.

- Increase the frequency of disinfection of door knobs and handles, restrooms, faucets, drinking fountains, chairs, desks and tables, computers, keyboards, toys, and other commonly touched and shared items.
- Always handle vomit and fecal material as if it contains norovirus. If someone vomits or has a fecal accident in a public area, ensure people clear the area as soon as possible.
- Ensure the person cleaning up the vomit or fecal material wears disposable gloves, a simple face mask, and disposable gown or coverall to avoid direct contact with the material.
- Spray a disinfectant effective against norovirus onto the vomit or fecal material, cover the material with disposable towels, rags, or other absorbent material, and allow the disinfectant to contact the material for at least 10 minutes (or longer if indicated on the disinfectant labeling).
- Place all soiled material into a trash bag and discard.
- Apply disinfectant again in the affected area. Since widespread environmental contamination can occur with norovirus, it is advisable to disinfect all areas within 25 feet of where the vomit or fecal material was located.
- After cleaning, be sure to discard gloves, coverall, mask, and other soiled items into the trash, and wash hands well.
- If a vomiting incident occurs in the cafeteria, kitchen area, or other food preparation area, ensure that any food items that might have been contaminated are discarded immediately. Consult with your local public health agency on the proper disinfection methods for kitchen and food contact surfaces.
- **Hand washing:** Review the importance of hand washing with students and staff. It may be helpful to take defined hand washing breaks for students and staff to encourage frequent hand washing. Remind students and staff to thoroughly wash their hands after using the restroom, before eating, and before handling food for others. Also, remind everyone that hand washing must be done with soap and warm water, washing all surfaces of the hands for at least 20 seconds; hand sanitizer is not an acceptable substitute for washing hands, but can be used to supplement frequent hand washing.

Information on norovirus:

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>

Sincerely,



Robert Benjamin M.D, MPH
Health Officer