



PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM NOROVIRUS

January 7, 2019– The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has identified increases in norovirus activity and is urging Michigan residents to take precautions to stay healthy.

Norovirus is the most common virus that causes vomiting and diarrhea. Outbreaks happen throughout the year but occur most often from November to April. These viruses are easily spread through food, by person-to-person contact or through contaminated surfaces. Therefore, take caution if someone in your household is ill. Norovirus infection is sometimes described as “stomach flu,” but it is not related to influenza (flu), a respiratory viral illness that can cause fever, cough, chills, headache, muscle aches, runny nose, and sore throat.

Norovirus often causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramping, but infected people may also have a low-grade fever, headache, weakness, and muscle aches. Symptoms can begin as early as 12 hours after exposure to the virus or as late as 72 hours. The symptoms of norovirus usually last one to three days. In most cases, ill individuals fully recover without medical attention.

However, norovirus infection may result in hospitalization due to dehydration, especially in the very young and elderly. Individuals with severe diarrhea should drink lots of liquids. Symptoms that are not seen with norovirus infection are bloody diarrhea or high fever. If these symptoms develop, contact your medical provider.

Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent norovirus. The best way to limit the spread of these viruses is frequent hand washing for at least 20 seconds using soap and warm running water, being sure to completely clean all areas of hands and under fingernails. This is especially important after using the bathroom or before preparing or eating food.

“One of the most important steps a person can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others is keeping their hands clean,” said Dr. Jennifer Morse, Medical Director for District Health Department #10 (DHD#10).

Additionally, preventing the contamination of food, drinks, water, and ice is also very important. People who have been sick with vomiting and diarrhea should not prepare or serve food to others for at least three days after their symptoms are gone. One-third cup of bleach diluted with one gallon of water is the most effective way to disinfect surfaces. Bleach should be used in well-ventilated areas. Hand sanitizers are ineffective against the virus.

Norovirus can remain on a variety of surfaces for extended periods of time. Doorknobs, faucets, sinks, toilets, bath rails, phones, counters, chairs, tables, handrails, light switches, keyboards, and other high-touch surfaces should be disinfected more frequently, but especially within a 25-foot radius after a vomiting incident. Steam clean carpets and upholstery. Wash clothes contaminated with vomit or feces with detergent and hot water and machine dry them at the highest heat setting.



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If symptoms do not go away within several days or you are experiencing dehydration, please contact your local health care provider.

If you suspect food poisoning from eating at a food service establishment or large gathering, please call your local health department office at www.dhd10.org/contact-us/ or call 888-217-3904.

Additional information about norovirus can be found at CDC.gov/norovirus.

About DHD #10

District Health Department #10 (DHD #10) is Michigan's largest geographical health department, mandated to promote and protect the public from unsafe and hazardous conditions and provide methods of promoting good health and disease prevention. Some of the vital programs provided by DHD #10 include Immunizations, Infectious Disease Control, STI Testing and Counseling, WIC, Maternal Infant Health Program, Healthy Families Northern Michigan, Children's Special Health Services, Hearing and Vision Screening, Family Planning, Cancer Screening, Worksite Wellness, Smoking Cessation, Substance Use Prevention, Chronic Disease Prevention, and Environmental Health Services. DHD #10 serves Crawford, Kalkaska, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Newaygo, Oceana, and Wexford counties. For more information, visit www.dhd10.org.

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