Congregate Care Facilities

Tacoma - Pierce County Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Information for Pierce County Long-Term Care Facilities

Disease Prevention & Management
3629 S. D St., Tacoma, WA 98418
(253) 649-1412 (p) • (253) 649-1389 (f)

Gastroenteritis Outbreak Guidelines

Norovirus often causes gastroenteritis. Norovirus can infect anyone and is extremely contagious. Symptoms can include vomiting, diarrhea, nausea and fever. When an outbreak is suspected, it is important to follow proper outbreak guidelines to prevent this virus from spreading among residents and staff.

Outbreaks are defined as an increase in illness above the expected or "normal" rate. It is important to know your facility's normal rates of illnesses that include vomiting and/or diarrhea, so you can determine when an outbreak may be occurring. If you think there might be an outbreak, or you're not sure, you can call the health department for advice.

Outbreaks must be reported. To report an outbreak, call Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department at (253) 649-1412. Press "0" and ask to speak with a nurse. The staff can help you determine the cause of the outbreak and what is needed to control it. When reporting an outbreak, it is helpful to have this information:

- Total number of residents and staff in facility.
- Number of residents and staff ill with vomiting or diarrhea.
  - For **residents**, provide this information by location (wing or floor, for example).
  - For **staff**, provide this information by workstation, including floor and/or wing. Interview food workers (individually and privately) and ask if they, or anyone in their household, have had vomiting or diarrhea in the last week. If you identify ill food workers, contact Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department for guidance.
- Average duration of illness (and range of duration, e.g., shortest to longest).

When an outbreak is suspected, complete the following actions. See appendix A for a printable checklist.

Gather Information on the Outbreak

Collect as much of the following as possible:

- Create a line list of ill residents and staff to help organize your information. A sample is included at the end of this document. Make sure to include the following information on the line list:
  - Patient name, date of birth.
  - Room number/residence wing.
  - Symptoms (i.e., vomiting, diarrhea, fever, bloody diarrhea).
  - Onset of symptoms.
  - Duration of illness.
- If staff are ill, use the provided staff line list. Make sure to include:
  - Job classification and location of their workstation.

- Dates and shifts that all worked prior to the onset of their illness.
- Dates and times worked while symptomatic.

- To get a visual picture of the outbreak, use a map of the facility and pinpoint each case with their onset date.
- If multiple cases occurred over a short time period, try to find out what most ill people had in common during the prior 48 hours (such as a common dining room, group activity, or a staff person who worked while ill). This helps you focus in on what may have been the cause of the initial outbreak.

Use Outbreak Control Measures

- **Hand Hygiene**
  - Hand washing with soap and water is necessary after providing care or having contact with patients suspected or confirmed with norovirus gastroenteritis, even if gloves are worn.
  - Redouble efforts to promote hand hygiene. Educate residents, staff, and visitors on proper technique and promote hand washing before any patient contact, snacks, or meals.
  - Hand sanitizers are less effective and not recommended during a norovirus outbreak.

- **Personal Protective Equipment**
  - Use contact and standard precautions (gown and gloves) when entering infected patient's area.
  - Use a surgical or procedure mask and eye protection or a full-face shield if there is an anticipated risk of splashes to the face during the care of patients, particularly among those who are vomiting.

- **Staff Restrictions**
  - Restrict ill employees (including volunteer workers) from patient care and food handling duties for 48 hours **after** their vomiting/diarrhea has ended. People can continue to spread illness even after they are feeling better.
  - Dedicate staff to work in affected areas. Staff should not float from affected areas to non-affected areas of the facility.
  - Do not assign non-essential staff to work in affected areas.

- **Resident Restrictions**
  - Keep ill residents in their rooms and on "Contact Precautions" as much as possible until 48 hours **after** their symptoms have stopped. During this time, staff should try to reduce feelings of isolation this can cause, including encouraging friends and family members to call more frequently.
  - A single occupancy room is preferred for ill residents. If it is not possible to place patients in a single occupancy room, efforts should be made to separate them from asymptomatic patients.

- **Food Service and Group Activities**
  - Norovirus is easily spread through food and hand-to-mouth contact. During a norovirus outbreak:
    - Halt group activities in affected areas, including birthday, holiday and special celebrations.
    - Consider halting all dining room activities and serve resident meals in their rooms.
    - Stop using self-service food bars and don't let resident/staff serve themselves.
    - If a self-service menu is unavoidable, individually package or wrap and serve directly to the resident.

- **Clean Soiled Areas Safely**
  - To prevent exposure to the virus, wear gloves, gown, masks and goggles during any cleanup of vomit or feces.
  - Use a surgical or procedure mask and eye protection or a full-face shield if there is an anticipated risk of splashes to the face during care of patients, particularly among those who are vomiting.
  - Use paper towels (or another disposable absorbent material) to clean visible debris. Double bag and discard.
  - For carpeted areas, use an absorbent material (like kitty litter or dry oatmeal) to absorb liquid. Double bag and discard.
  - Soiled carpets should be steam cleaned 160°F for five minutes.
  - To minimize particles in the air, don't use a vacuum to clean vomit or stool.
  - When done cleaning, remove gloves, gown, mask and goggles items in a way that prevents contaminated surfaces from touching the skin. Dispose of these items in a sealed garbage bag.

- **Disinfect After Cleaning**
  - Norovirus can stay on surfaces for several days or weeks. Immediately clean then disinfect contaminated surfaces using a chlorine bleach or other disinfectant registered as effective against norovirus by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
    - Mix a concentration 5000ppm (1 ½ cup household bleach per gallon) for surfaces that have been visibly contaminated.
    - Mix a concentration 1000ppm (1T household bleach per quart) to disinfect non-soiled surfaces.
    - Alternately, a list of EPA-approved disinfectants is available at epa.gov/pesticide-registration/epas-registered-antimicrobial-products-effective-against-norovirus-feline. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's recommendations.
  - Increase the amount of cleaning and disinfecting done throughout the facility.
  - Clean and disinfect bathrooms, bathtub, toilets, and frequently touched objects such as faucets, handles, doorknobs, handrails and tables several times each day until the outbreak is over.
  - Clean and disinfect equipment that is shared between patients.
  - Use new cleaning cloths when moving between patient areas.
  - Clothes or linens that become soiled should be handled carefully. Wear gloves while handling soiled items and wash your hands after removing gloves. Wash soiled items with detergent then machine dry on high heat setting.
  - **NEVER** mix bleach with ammonia or other chemicals.

- **Additional Measures**
  - Consider halting new admissions until the outbreak is over—particularly in wings/wards where there are active cases to prevent the introduction of new susceptible patients.
  - Adequately clean and disinfect common medical equipment between residents. Consider dedicating piece of commonly used equipment for use in the affected area.
  - Post signs for visitors about the outbreak, and alert them of the need for increased hand hygiene (sample signs are provided in this document).
  - Very old or young visitors and those with underlying medical problems should postpone their visit, if possible, until the outbreak is over.
  - Strongly encourage ill friends and family members to postpone any visits until they are no longer symptomatic.

Obtain Clinical Specimens

- Consider collecting stool specimens from recently ill individuals (within the first 48 hours of illness, if possible). This is especially important if symptoms appear more severe (sustained fever, bloody diarrhea, etc.) than the usual viral gastroenteritis illness.
- Send stool cultures from approximately 2–3 ill residents for testing to rule-out any bacterial pathogen that may be causing illness.
- If the stool cultures are negative, and symptoms are generally self-limiting, the cause of the outbreak is most likely norovirus or another viral pathogen. Control measures are the same during any viral GI outbreak; so further testing is generally not needed. Norovirus testing is available commercially, but the diagnosis is usually made based on the self-limiting nature of the illness.

Appendix A

Gastroenteritis Outbreak Checklist

Gather Information

- ☐ Use the provided line lists to track the outbreak in both patients and staff. Make sure to fill in all of the information including identifying information, symptoms, and outcomes. Fax a copy to Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, Confidential Fax (253) 649-1389
- ☐ To get a visual picture of the outbreak, use a map of the facility and pinpoint each case with their onset dates. Try to find out what most ill people had in common during the prior 48 hours.
- ☐ Interview food workers (individually and privately) and ask if they, or anyone in their household, has had vomiting or diarrhea in the last week.
- ☐ Report the start of an outbreak to Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department. Call (253) 649-1412. Press "0" and ask to speak with a nurse.

Use Outbreak Control Measures

- ☐ Promote hand hygiene. Educate residents, staff, and visitors on proper hand washing technique.
- ☐ Make sure staff and visitors use personal protective equipment (gloves, gown, mask) when entering the infected patient's area.
- ☐ Restrict ill employees from patient care and food handling for 48 hours ***after*** symptoms have ended.
- ☐ Dedicate specific staff to work in affected areas. Do not allow staff working in affected areas to work in unaffected areas of the facility. Only allow essential staff to work in affected areas.
- ☐ Place ill residents on Contact Precautions and restrict them to their rooms as much as possible until 48 hours ***after*** symptoms have ended.
- ☐ Halt all group activities in affected areas.
- ☐ Do not allow residents or staff to serve themselves, including self-service or buffet style eating. If possible, halt all dining room activities and serve residents meals in their rooms.
- ☐ Handle soiled linens carefully, without agitating them, to avoid dispersal of virus. Use Standard Precautions, including the use of appropriate PPE (e.g., gloves and gowns), to minimize the likelihood of cross-contamination.
- ☐ During outbreaks, change privacy curtains when they are visibly soiled and upon patient discharge or transfer.

Clean the Environment

- ☐ Increase cleaning and disinfecting, especially in common areas.
- ☐ Immediately clean any area that becomes soiled with vomit or feces.

Additional Measures

- ☐ If possible, halt new admissions.
- ☐ Post the provided signs for visitors and residents.
- ☐ Encourage friends and family members to postpone their visits if they very old, very young, or feeling ill.

Obtain Clinical Specimen

- ☐ Collect stool specimens from approximately 2–3 recently ill individuals for testing (within 48 hours of illness onset), especially if symptoms appear severe.

Outbreak Summary Report

- ☐ Complete and fax the outbreak summary report (included in this toolkit) to Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department Disease Prevention & Management Program confidential fax (253) 649-1389.

Outbreak Summary Report
Gastroenteritis/Norovirus

For Pierce County Long-Term Care Facilities

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Fax completed form to Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department Disease Prevention & Management confidential fax: (253) 649-1389.

Reporting Facility

Facility Name _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Person Reporting _____ Title _____ Phone _____

Symptoms (check all that apply)

☐ Vomiting ☐ Diarrhea ☐ Bloody diarrhea ☐ Fever ☐ Other _____

Duration of Illness

Shortest _____ Min. Hours Days Longest _____ Min. Hours Days

Case Information

Total number of symptomatic residents _____ Total number of residents in your facility _____

Total number of symptomatic staff _____ Total number of staff in your facility _____

Number of ill staff who prepare food or provide direct patient care _____

Date first case became ill_____/_____/_____ Date last case became ill_____/_____/_____

Laboratory, Hospitalizations, Deaths_

Any stool cultures? ☐ No ☐ Yes, # tested_____ Describe positive lab findings_____

Emergency Room visits_____ # Hospitalizations_____ # Deaths_____

Outbreak Control Steps Taken (check all that apply)

☐ Halt group activities (including dining room).

☐ Promote proper hand hygiene practices.

☐ Dedicate specific staff to work in affected areas.

☐ Increase cleaning and disinfecting throughout the facility.

☐ Restrict ill staff from patient care and food handling duties until 48 hours after symptoms resolved.

☐ Ensure housekeeping staff have appropriate PPE and use an EPA registered product effective against norovirus.

☐ Keep ill residents in their rooms (as much as possible) and on Contact Precautions until 48 hours after symptoms resolve.

☐ Other, describe _____

Staff Norovirus Outbreak Line List

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Date	Facility Name	Contact Name	Contact Phone Number	Outbreak Onset Date

Staff Name	Age	Job Title	Job Location	Onset Date/Time	Vomiting	Diarrhea	Fever	Abdominal Cramps	Lab Confirmed	Comments
				Date: Time:	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	
				Date: Time:	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	
				Date: Time:	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	
				Date: Time:	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	
				Date: Time:	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	
				Date: Time:	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	
				Date: Time:	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	
				Date: Time:	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	
				Date: Time:	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	
				Date: Time:	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	

Total Number of Staff in the Facility	

Norovirus Outbreak Line List

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Date	Facility Name	Contact Name	Contact Phone Number	Outbreak Onset Date

Patient Name	Date of Birth	Room No.	Hall or Floor	Onset Date/Time	Vomiting	Diarrhea	Fever	Abdominal Cramps	Lab Confirmed	Comments	Outcome
				Date: **Time:**	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
				Date: **Time:**	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
				Date: **Time:**	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
				Date: **Time:**	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
				Date: **Time:**	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
				Date: **Time:**	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
				Date: **Time:**	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
				Date: **Time:**	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
				Date: **Time:**	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		
				Date: **Time:**	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No		

Total Number of Residents in the Facility	

NOTICE TO VISITORS

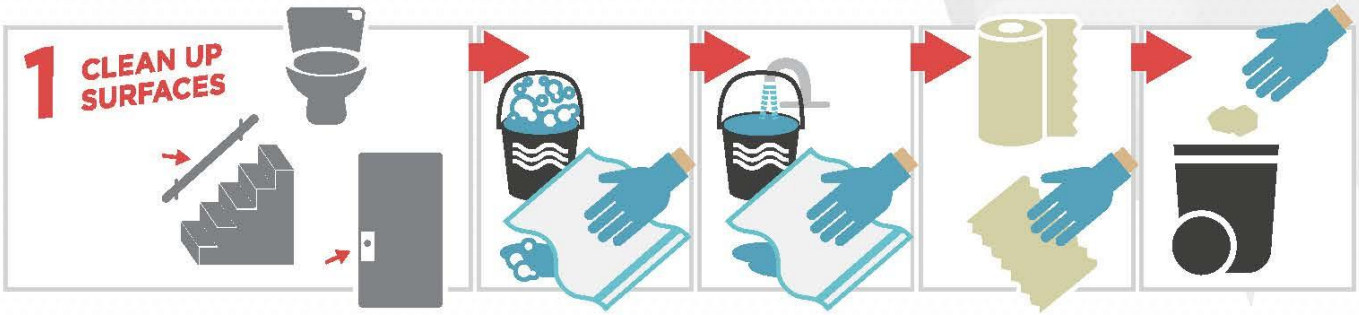
There is a viral illness outbreak causing vomiting and diarrhea.

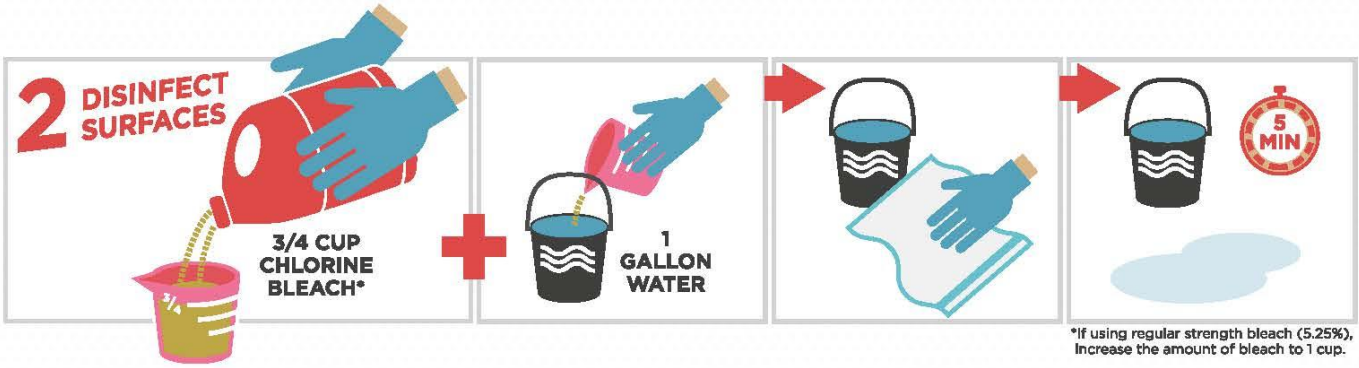
If the person you are visiting is ill, please check in at the nurses station.

Postpone your visit if you have a weakened immune system or are at risk for health complications.

Help Prevent the Spread of NOROVIRUS A STOMACH BUG

Stop norovirus! Clean surfaces that are touched a lot.





*If using regular strength bleach (5.25%), increase the amount of bleach to 1 cup.

Norovirus spreads by contact with an infected person or by touching a contaminated surface or eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water.

El norovirus se propaga por el contacto con una persona infectada o al tocar una superficie contaminada o comiendo alimentos contaminados o beber agua contaminada.

Le norovirus se propage par contact avec une personne infectée, en touchant une surface contaminée, en mangeant des aliments contaminés ou en buvant de l'eau contaminée.

诺如病毒的传播途径是与感染者接触或接触污染的表面或食用被污染的食物或饮用受污染的水。

Scientific experts from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) helped to develop this poster. For more information on norovirus prevention, please see http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/preventing-infection.html.

American Chemistry Council

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