



# County of Yolo

## HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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To: Yolo County Healthcare Providers

From: Christian Sandrock MD, Yolo County Health Officer

**Subject: Health Advisory on Norovirus Outbreak**

Yolo County has received reports of five outbreaks of Norovirus-like illness in late December and January. At least 50 people are known to have been affected. Norovirus has been confirmed in one outbreak.

You are receiving this advisory to ensure that health care providers are aware of the current Norovirus outbreaks and have information on how to prevent and control spread of this illness.

Norovirus is a highly contagious viral illness. The most common symptoms are vomiting with diarrhea, often without fever. The duration of the illness is usually only 1 or 2 days. Dehydration is the most common complication, especially in the young and the elderly.

Norovirus is a highly contagious illness. As few as 10 to 100 virus particles may cause illness. Norovirus is spread primarily by the fecal-oral route, either by person-to-person contact, or by contaminated food or water. It may also be spread by droplets from vomitus. It is a very hardy virus and can remain infectious for long periods on surfaces. It can survive heating and freezing. Diagnosis can be confirmed by laboratory testing of feces or vomit.

Interrupting person-to-person transmission can limit the extent of the outbreak. Both the patient and the environment must be addressed to stop the spread of illness. Guidelines have been developed by California Department of Public Health to assist long-term care facilities. These guidelines are available at:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/pubsforms/Guidelines/Documents/PCofViralGastroenteritisOutbreaks.pdf>

**General precautions for clinics and long-term care facilities:**

- **Disinfect clinic and public areas** with a disinfectant approved for Norovirus. Dilute chlorine bleach (1:50) will kill Norovirus on most surfaces.
- **Reinforce the use of handwashing** for all staff members. Use proper hygiene during food preparation.
- **Ill staff members should stay home** and not return to work until 24 to 48 hours after resolution of symptoms.
- **Consider postponing patient transfer** out of a care facility or non-urgent appointments until the outbreak is under control.
- Critically evaluate all patients with suspected Norovirus for **dehydration**.
- **Notify the hospital** of anyone being seen with Norovirus-like symptoms.
- **Report all suspected Norovirus outbreaks** to Yolo County Health Department as soon as possible.

Yolo County Health Department staff is available to assist clinics, health care providers and long-term care facilities with questions regarding Norovirus, including preventative measures and outbreak control.

**Specific information for first responders:**

- **Use contact precautions**, including gown and gloves, and a mask in presence of active vomiting.
- **Responder should use good hygiene**, including washing hands and other exposed skin. Waterless hand cleaners may not be effective for Norovirus.
- Provider should change or cover any clothing exposed to vomitus.

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- The first responder must **scrupulously clean all exposed equipment** if a patient has diarrhea or vomiting. The area within an 8 to 10 foot range of a vomiting incident must be disinfected with a solution such as 1:50 household bleach.
- **Report** any active vomiting or diarrhea to the receiving facility.
- **Ill first responders must stay home** until symptom free for 24 to 48 hours.

**More information is available from:**

Yolo County Health Department, Public Health Nursing: (530) 666-8645

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Norovirus.aspx>

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Norovirus/>