

What is Norovirus?

Norovirus is the leading cause of disease from contaminated foods in the US. It is responsible for more illnesses than all other viruses, bacteria, and parasites combined. Of all foodborne disease outbreaks with a known cause in the US, over half are caused by norovirus. Norovirus is transmitted by the fecal-oral route via contaminated water and foods. The types of foods most commonly involved in foodborne norovirus outbreaks are food items that are contaminated with norovirus through handling by ill food workers.

Prevention Tips

The following recommendations can help prevent the spread of norovirus at sites where meals are provided free of charge to people in need in our community:

- Food workers must be excluded from food preparation and cleaning activities if they have fever, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Before allowing ill food workers or volunteers to return to work, please contact SRHD.
- Food workers must wash their hands before putting their glove on and each time they change gloves. All food workers must change their gloves each time they change tasks and when their gloves become contaminated.
- Avoid self-serve buffet style service to help prevent contamination of the food, drinks and utensils being provided.
- Avoid putting out self-service food items such as drink pitchers, coffee dispensers, butter/margarine, salt and pepper shakers, and condiments.
- Use disposable trays and eating utensils if possible.
- Use a chlorine based sanitizer to properly sanitize food contact surfaces and non-food contact surfaces before and after each meal period. It is important to note that quaternary ammonium compounds (quats) are not as effective against norovirus.

Symptoms are nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain. Headache and low-grade fever may occur. Illness usually develops 12 to 48 hours after exposure. Most people will get better within 1 to 3 days but remain infectious.

What do I do if a food worker or volunteer is ill?

- Please contact Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) Environmental Public Health Division at (509)324-1560 ext. 2 to report the illness as soon as possible. If you need help after our normal business hours or on weekends please call (509)324-1500 and you will be routed to someone who can assist you.
- Food workers or volunteers experiencing symptoms of fever, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea must be excluded from the establishment for at least 72 hours after symptoms stop.

Proper hand washing is essential in preventing the spread of illness.

- Wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Dry hands using paper towel or air dryer.
- Turn off faucet using a paper towel.
- If in a restroom use a paper towel to open the door.

How do I clean and disinfect all the affected areas when norovirus is suspected?

Food Workers and Cleaning Crew Health and Safety

- The cleaning crew must consist of workers who have not experienced nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or stomach cramping for at least 72 hours prior to reporting to the cleaning crew.
- If a member of the cleaning crew is a food worker and becomes ill as a result of working on the cleanup crew, the food worker must be immediately excluded and the facility **MUST BE** re-cleaned.
- Workers assigned to facility cleaning should immediately wash hands and put gloves on upon entering the establishment.
- Be sure cleaning crew uses personal protective equipment including safety glasses if handling strong bleach solutions, single use gloves, respirators, and disposable chemical resistant aprons.

General Cleaning Guidelines for Kitchen and Food Preparation Surfaces: **Clean** surfaces with a detergent solution; **Rinse** with clean water; **Sanitize** with a solution of 1 cup bleach per gallon of water; let sit for one minute and let air dry. This process must then be followed with a standard wash, rinse and sanitize (50-200ppm residual chlorine) procedure for all kitchen surfaces and utensils.

Clean, Rinse and Sanitize all surfaces that may have been contaminated and include all surfaces touched by infectious food workers, volunteers and guests. Surfaces that need to be decontaminated include:

- Tableware, flatware, and reusable food storage containers.
- Tables, chairs and chair backs, hand rails, doors and knobs, counters, shelves, light switches, elevator buttons, equipment faces, telephones, surfaces of computer components (unplug before cleaning), and all other exposed surfaces.
- Restroom surfaces; bath rails, handrails, etc. Remove all items from cabinets or shelves before cleaning.
- Equipment and ice machine interiors. This includes washing the insides of ice storage bins, refrigerators, and microwave ovens. Remove all items from shelves before cleaning.
- Walls and floors.
- Carpeting, upholstery, and mats should be steam cleaned.
- Linens should be laundered offsite with chlorine bleach for fabrics that can withstand the use of bleach. Machine dry with heat at the maximum level the material can tolerate.

Closing the facility may be necessary to prevent further spread of illness and to allow adequate time to clean and disinfect the facility.