

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Note: Sound bites on this topic will be available shortly at: <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/audio>**

## Norovirus Outbreaks Reported to DHHS Preventive Measures Help Stop Spread

**Lincoln** – The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services received several reports of norovirus outbreaks in long-term care facilities within the last several weeks. When there are outbreaks in facilities, it means norovirus is likely circulating in communities as well.

Norovirus spreads quickly and easily. It can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. People may also experience stomach cramps, fever and head or body aches. Norovirus infections are transmitted in many ways including:

- People with diarrhea or vomiting handling and preparing food.
- Direct contact with an infected person, such as through sharing food or shaking hands.
- Hand-to-mouth transfer after touching contaminated surfaces or objects.
- Airborne droplets of vomit.

Illness usually starts 12-48 hours after exposure and lasts one to three days. Treatment is supportive therapy for dehydration.

“People who are vomiting and have diarrhea should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Young children and the elderly can become dehydrated more easily and should be watched carefully,” said Dr. Joseph Acierno, Chief Medical Officer and Director of Public Health for DHHS.

Prevention tips:

- **Have a “sick” bag close by** - With norovirus infection, vomiting can happen so quickly that you may be unable to reach the bathroom. If you’re nauseous, find something that can be used to contain the vomit to help control the spread of the virus.
- **Do not prepare food** for other people during your illness and for two to three days after getting better.

- **Clean and disinfect** any object or surface contaminated by vomiting or diarrhea with a household cleaner containing bleach or with a homemade cleaner made by adding 5-25 tablespoons of bleach to a gallon of water.
- **Wash clothing** that may be contaminated with virus after an episode of illness, using hot water and soap.
- **Wash your hands frequently** with soap and water, especially before eating and after going to the bathroom or changing diapers.
- **Wash fruits and vegetables and cook shellfish thoroughly** - Cook shellfish to 140 degrees or higher.

People working in child care centers, schools or nursing homes should pay special attention to children or residents who have symptoms of norovirus. The virus can spread very fast in these types of environments.

Additional recommendations for facilities having norovirus outbreaks:

- Restrict or defer admissions to affected areas and exclude non-essential staff.
- Stop all group activities temporarily.
- Notify visitors and provide handwashing instructions.
- Thorough cleaning and disinfecting of patient care areas and frequently touched surfaces.

Suspected norovirus outbreaks in facilities should be reported to a local health department or DHHS' Office of Epidemiology at 402-471-2937. Public health officials will work with facilities and provide guidance, recommendations and suggest appropriate testing.

Find your local health department here - <http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Documents/contacts.pdf>

For more information about norovirus, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/downloads/keyfacts.pdf>.