



# Norovirus & Outbreaks

## Healthcare Facilities Quick Guide



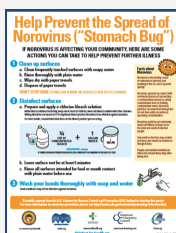
**Norovirus** is a contagious virus that causes diarrhea and vomiting. Norovirus outbreaks can be especially problematic in healthcare facilities as they are difficult to control and the virus lasts a long time in the environment. Bleach solution or EPA-approved products are best for disinfection as these can eliminate most pathogens.

Prevention and control of **norovirus** should focus on limiting direct contact with infected persons and contact with contaminated surfaces. Handwashing is recommended because alcohol-based hand sanitizer is NOT effective against norovirus.



If you suspect an outbreak, contact your local health department or the Tennessee Department of Health (615-741-7247) for assistance and guidance on cleaning and response. The Health Department might ask about the number and location of ill patients and staff as well as details about the facility.

(CTRL-click posters for larger versions)



# Norovirus Checklist

## Recognition, Reporting & Testing

- Upon suspicion of a norovirus outbreak, notify your [local health department](#) or call TDH at (615-741-7247)
- Maintain a line listing of ill residents and staff (Example can be found here)
- Collect and submit 5 specimens from ill residents and staff as soon as an outbreak is suspected
- Outbreak is considered resolved when 96 hours have elapsed from resolution of the last case's symptoms

## Control Measures for Facility

**Note: Decisions to institute infection control measures should NOT be delayed for specimen results.**

### **Infection Control:**

- Institute contact precautions for ill residents during outbreak
- Use mask, gloves and gowns while caring for ill residents and cleaning up feces or vomitus
- Use dedicated or disposable equipment for resident care
- Separate ill residents from well residents as much as possible
- Minimize resident and staff movement between affected and unaffected units/wards
- Enforce strict hand hygiene for all facility staff
- Encourage washing hands with soap and water instead of using hand sanitizer. Handwashing is recommended as hand sanitizer is NOT effective against norovirus

### **Environmental Controls:**

- Use [EPA-approved products](#) for use against norovirus for routine cleaning and disinfection
- Clean all high traffic areas and high touch items (faucets, door handles, and toilet or bath rails)
- Clean soiled carpets and soft furnishings with hot water and detergent or steam clean as appropriate. DO NOT VACUUM
- Handle soiled linens carefully using appropriate infection control precautions. DO NOT SHAKE
- Continue thorough cleaning of affected personal and communal areas until outbreak is considered resolved

### **Administrative Controls:**

- Exclude ill staff from work for at least 48 hours after symptoms have resolved
- Suspend group activities as much as possible until after the outbreak is contained
- Consider risks/benefits of limiting dining hall services
- Post signage about the outbreak and proper hand hygiene (samples signage can be found here)
- Restrict admissions if outbreak escalates or is prolonged
- Consider delaying transfer. If not possible, notify transfer facility of outbreak

## Recommendations for Residents & Visitors

- Encourage ill residents to stay in their room for at least 48 hours after symptoms have resolved
- Promote good hand hygiene for residents: after using the toilet, having contact with an ill individual, and before preparing food, eating or drinking. Handwashing is recommended as hand sanitizer is NOT effective against norovirus
- Encourage ill visitors to wait at least 48 hours after symptoms resolve before visiting residents
- Consider restricting outside visitation until the outbreak has subsided

## Internal and External Communications

- Identify a single point of contact for internal communications
- Identify a single point of contact for external communications
- Notify staff of outbreak and control measures and conduct enhanced surveillance for ill staff
- Notify residents/guardians of outbreak and control measures and request ill residents report to nursing staff
- Consider a final communication to staff, residents, and guardians when the outbreak has resolved