



Norovirus

Definition:

Acute gastroenteritis caused by Norovirus, a type of calicivirus.

Signs and symptoms:

Symptoms include sudden-onset of vomiting, watery non-bloody diarrhea, abdominal cramps and nausea. Other symptoms include fever, headache and malaise.

Transmission:

Noroviruses are highly contagious, requiring as few as 18 particles to cause illness. Transmission is due to eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus; touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus and putting fingers in mouth or having close contact with someone who is infected with norovirus. Persons are contagious as soon as illness starts and for at least 3 days after illness ends. Norovirus can be present in stool for 2 weeks or more after symptoms resolve.

Diagnosis:

Norovirus can be diagnosed by PCR testing of stool or vomit specimens at the Maine Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) and other laboratories.

Role of the School Nurse:

Prevention

- Provide education to students and staff regarding good hand washing with soap and water (hand sanitizer gel can be used in addition to soap and water; however, it should not be used alone)
- Promote washing of fruits and vegetables
- Consider cleaning high touch surfaces (such as door knobs, shared computer keyboards, water fountains) more frequently, especially when illness is present
- Use EPA-approved disinfectants when cleaning (<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/disinfectants-emerging-viral-pathogens-evps-list-q>)

Treatment Recommendations

- If symptoms are noted, the child should be referred to their primary care provider
- Non-specific supportive therapy, including hydration, is important

Exclusions

- Students should be excluded from school and school trips while symptomatic with diarrhea

Reporting Requirements

- If students experience sudden onset of illness at school, report to Maine CDC via phone 1-800-821-5821
- If your school has greater than 15% absenteeism with similar cases and symptoms then this should be reported through the NEO 15% absentee application
- Track counts of illness each day

Resources:

- Maine CDC norovirus website (including fact sheet) www.maine.gov/dhhs/norovirus
- Federal CDC norovirus website <http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus>
- Federal CDC healthy swimming website <http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/>