

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

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The Health Department of Northwest Michigan staff are warning residents of several Norovirus outbreaks occurring in the area and are offering precautionary measures to keep summer dining experiences safe.

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause gastroenteritis in people. The most common way to become infected with Norovirus - often called "stomach flu" - is through contact with an infected person or by ingesting contaminated food or water. Norovirus illness usually begins 24-48 hours after exposure but can appear as early as 10 hours after exposure. The illness is usually brief, with symptoms lasting only 1 or 2 days. Common symptoms include:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Stomach cramping
- Low-grade fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- A general sense of tiredness

Noroviruses are very contagious and spread easily from person to person. The virus is found in the stool and vomit of infected people. People can become infected in several ways, including eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated by infected food handlers, touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus and then touching their mouth before hand washing, or having direct contact with another person who is infected and then touching their mouth before hand washing. Outbreaks also have occurred from eating undercooked oysters harvested from contaminated waters; cooking kills the virus. Drinking water contaminated by sewage can also be a source of illness.

Prevention

In general, you can help protect yourself and others from norovirus by washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water. You should also avoid preparing food for others, working in a day care center, health care facility or food service establishment if you have gastrointestinal symptoms including vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, or a low-grade fever. If those symptoms become severe, seek medical attention.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit nwhealth.org.

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