



## 2020 Health Advisory #1: Norovirus prevention and response

*Please distribute this advisory to staff in the Departments of Critical Care, Emergency Medicine, Family Practice, Geriatrics, Internal Medicine, Infectious Disease, Infection Control, Obstetrics, Pediatrics, Pulmonary Medicine, Pharmacy, and Laboratory Medicine*

- **Viral gastroenteritis reports are increasing in New York City**
- **Report outbreaks in congregate settings (e.g., child care settings, schools, assisted living facilities) to the New York City Health Department**

January 13, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Outbreaks of GI illness have recently been reported in group settings, including schools, child care programs, and assisted living facilities. During December 2019, the New York City Health Department received 353 reports of norovirus infection among NYC residents, more than twice the number of reports received in November 2019. The Health Department reminds clinicians to suspect norovirus in patients with vomiting and diarrhea, and to take steps to prevent or limit transmission within group or congregate settings.

GI viruses, such as norovirus, can spread very rapidly in facilities and other congregate settings. The primary symptoms of norovirus infection include vomiting and diarrhea, which typically last 24 to 48 hours.

Careful attention to hand hygiene, environmental cleaning, and early intervention if illness is detected can limit the spread of these viruses. To help limit the spread of norovirus, we are asking that health care providers:

- Remind patients, caregivers, and staff to wash their hands often with warm water and soap, especially when caring for someone who is sick, before touching or eating food, and after using the restroom.
- Clean any surfaces that may be contaminated with norovirus or become dirty from vomit or stool **immediately** with a 10% bleach solution (1 part bleach to 10 parts water).
  - Phenolic-based disinfectants have also been shown to be active against norovirus but may require higher concentrations than manufacturer recommendations for routine use to decontaminate surfaces.
- Clean high-touch surfaces such as handrails, doorknobs, floors, elevator buttons, faucets, and toilets frequently.
- Acutely ill children should stay home from school and child care programs. Staff who are experiencing vomiting or diarrhea and work in child care, schools, and medical care settings, and employees who handle food should **stay home until 48 hours after they are no longer sick**. Staff who develop illness at work should be sent home.

Clusters of diarrhea, vomiting, and other GI illness in congregate settings (three or more ill staff members, students, and/or patients) should be reported to the Health Department's Provider Access Line at **(866) 692-3641**.

Thank you for your partnership in norovirus surveillance and control in New York City.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Demetre C. Daskalakis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Demetre C. Daskalakis, MD, MPH  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Disease Control