



SAN BENITO COUNTY

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Press Release

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San Benito County Public Health Services is working with other local public health departments across the state to help control norovirus outbreaks that have increased in the past few weeks, and are occurring in schools and other institutional settings. Norovirus can spread quickly in settings where people come in close contact with each other such as cruise ships, daycare centers, schools and health care facilities. It is the leading cause of gastrointestinal illness in the U.S.

"Norovirus outbreaks usually have an annual peak earlier in spring, but this year's is later, and particularly disruptive to end-of-the -school-year activities," said San Benito County Public Health Officer Dr. Gail Newel. Norovirus is very infectious and can spread rapidly wherever people congregate and share food and bathroom facilities. Fortunately, most people with norovirus infection will recover quickly, usually in one to three days. Norovirus can remain in a person's body for up to two weeks after that person feels better. It can also stay on surfaces for a long time so proper disinfection is essential to stop the spread.

Norovirus causes inflammation of the stomach and intestines. Common symptoms include diarrhea, vomiting, nausea and stomach pain. While most people with norovirus get better within 1 to 3 days, the virus can make a person feel extremely ill with vomiting and diarrhea many times a day. This can lead to dehydration, especially in young children, older adults and people with other illnesses. Symptoms of dehydration include decreased urination, dry mouth and throat, and feeling dizzy when standing up. Children who are dehydrated may cry with few or no tears and be unusually sleepy or fussy. It is important that children with norovirus stay well-hydrated. Fortunately, norovirus illnesses are usually self-limiting and resolve with supportive care.

"The best ways to stop transmission from occurring is to properly wash hands and handle food safely," said Dr. Newel. Infected people should stay at home when they're sick. They should avoid caring for other people and preparing food for others during illness and for at least two days after symptoms stop. Surfaces and objects in contact with vomit or diarrhea should be disinfected with a bleach solution or washed in a washing machine with detergent. Wear gloves and wash hands carefully after any contact with contaminated objects.

For more information about norovirus, please visit: CDPH website

(<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Norovirus.aspx>), CDC website

(<https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/index.html>) or contact Public Health Services at (831) 637-5367.

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