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| DOH 420-174 | **Norovirus Outbreak Control Checklist for Local Health Jurisdictions: Health and Long Term Care Facilities** |

The following checklist is intended to help guide local health jurisdictions (LHJs) responding to potential norovirus outbreaks in healthcare and long term care facilities. These steps are recommendations, not requirements, and are subject to LHJ discretion. A [checklist for facility use](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/420-170-NoroFacilityChecklistHC-LTC.docx) is also available, should LHJs decide to disseminate the facility checklist to a facility experiencing a potential norovirus outbreak. The LHJ may modify this facility checklist, as needed.

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| **Norovirus Outbreak Interventions:** | **N/A** | **Date Completed** |
| 1. **Determine if norovirus is the cause of gastroenteritis outbreak.** *See* [*Norovirus Background*](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/420-180-NorovirusBackgroundInfo.pdf) *for a description of norovirus.* |  |  |
| 1. Rule out possibility of bacterial infection.   If possible, test several stool samples for possible bacterial causes of gastroenteritis, such as Salmonella, *E. coli* O157:H7, and Shigella, especially if diarrhea is bloody or if diarrhea persists for 2 or more days.4 | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. Use Kaplan’s criteria *if* no laboratory diagnostics exist or are delayed.8   Kaplan’s criteria:   1. Vomiting in more than half of symptomatic cases, and 2. Mean (or median) incubation period of 24 to 48 hours, and 3. Mean (or median) duration of illness of 12 to 60 hours, and 4. No bacterial pathogen isolated from stool culture   Do not delay initiating outbreak control measures when waiting on stool test results. | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. Once the LHJ has determined through the Kaplan criteria that there is a possible norovirus outbreak, the LHJ should contact the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) Office of Communicable Disease Epidemiology (CDE) to coordinate possible testing. 2. Request an outbreak number from CDE and report the possible number of cases from whom stool samples could be collected at the time. At least 3 samples from individuals in the acute phase of illness (within 2-3 days of onset)8 are required for testing. 3. CDE will consult with the Washington State Public Health Laboratories (PHL) to determine if samples can be tested and communicate to the LHJ if testing can occur. 4. The LHJ should send CDE the following information on all the cases from whom the LHJ is trying to collect stool samples: requesting LHJ, submitter, method of transport, expected specimen arrival, patient initials, date of birth, specimen collection date, type of specimen(s) expected, and any pertinent test results from commercial labs. CDE will prepare and provide an illness manifest to the PHL. 5. When specimens are collected for diagnostic or outbreak detection testing, they should be individually bagged, sealed, and kept on ice or frozen refrigerant packs at 4 °C (range 2-8 °C) in a waterproof container while being transported to the lab. If testing is to occur within 2-3 weeks, whole stool specimens or vomitus should be kept stored at 4 °C (range 2-8 °C). 6. See sample requirements and the required requisition form by searching for norovirus on the [PHL Micro Lab Test Menu](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/PublicHealthLaboratories/MicrobiologyLabTestMenu). | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. **Communication.** *See* [*sample communication framework.*](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/420-177-NoroCommunicationsFramework.xlsx) |  |  |
| 1. Report suspected or confirmed outbreak to CDE. | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. Advise the facility to take the following actions (also on the facility checklists) to educate staff, visitors, and patients/residents about the importance of following outbreak control activities:  * Provide periodic briefings to staff and residents outlining the status of the outbreak and outbreak control activities being implemented.4 * Provide information about the transmission of viral gastroenteritis and infection control procedures.4 * Provide clear guidelines on how to report new ill patients, new ill staff, public vomiting/fecal accidents, handwashing sinks that need to be stocked, etc.4 | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. Work with the facility to ensure the following: 2. Facility administration and infection control team are aware of the possible outbreak.11 3. Patients/residents, relatives, and visitors are aware of the outbreak, such as through signs at entry/exit and email notifications.11 *See* [*sample notification alert*](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/420-184-NoroNotificationAlert.docx)*.* | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. **Monitor the outbreak.** |  |  |
| 1. Determine if the outbreak is foodborne. A foodborne disease outbreak is defined as an incident in which 1) two or more persons experience a similar illness after exposure to the same food source and 2) epidemiologic evidence implicates the food as the likely source of the illness.5 One indicator of a foodborne disease outbreak is if all the onset dates are clustered around one point in time that falls within the incubation period for norovirus (12-48 hours)2 after a shared food exposure. If the outbreak is foodborne, consult the [WA DOH Foodborne Disease Outbreaks webpage](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/NotifiableConditions/FoodborneDiseaseOutbreaks) for response materials. | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. Decide what information on infected individuals is needed to determine the source of the outbreak (e.g., infected individual’s location, date/time of onset, events attended, etc.). Communicate to the facility any appropriate cutoff for them submitting case report line lists, based on facility resources (e.g., requesting line list information daily for the first 100 infected individuals or for all cases over the first 3 days). *See* [*case report worksheet for sample form the facility could submit*](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/420-178-NoroCaseReportWorksheet.xlsx)*.* | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. If seeking collaboration with CDE for outbreak investigation, send the line list of infected individuals to CDE as requested. | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. **Identify and eliminate common sources of transmission.** |  |  |
| 1. Determine which foods that may have been contaminated need to be removed from service for holding, testing, or discarding, which may include such items as:  * leftover food from meals implicated in a point-source outbreak (an outbreak where several people who shared the same meal become ill in a short period of time);4 * open packages and open boxes of food that might be served without thorough cooking; * prepared food and ingredients that may be served without thorough cooking; * condiments that have been out for food worker or customer use including breading, salt, pepper, hot sauce, ketchup, etc.; * condiment bottles that are refilled, if they cannot be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized; * open cases of single service articles including to-go boxes, wax paper, napkins, etc.; * ice and other beverage ingredients. | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. Consider advising the facility to discontinue family-style or self-serve buffet meal service and instead designate food service employees to serve visitors/residents until the outbreak is under control.4 | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. **Prevent personnel from becoming infected.** |  |  |
| 1. Advise the facility to take the following actions (also in the facility checklists) to prevent personnel from becoming infected:  * Review proper handwashing technique with employees.   Use soap and water for at least 20 seconds for hand hygiene after providing care or having contact with patients suspected or confirmed with norovirus.2,8   * Ensure that handwashing stations have soap, paper towels and hands-free trash bins. * Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) (gowns, gloves, and masks) to staff.4 * Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60%-95% ethanol12 (not as effective as handwashing).   Educate staff to use sanitizers as an adjunct between handwashing and only when hands are not visibly soiled.4   * Direct personnel coming into direct contact with ill persons to wear disposable gloves and to wear water proof gowns when contamination with fecal material or vomitus is possible.4 * Direct personnel to practice proper handwashing technique and to wear gloves and masks when cleaning areas grossly contaminated by feces or vomit.4 | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. **Prevent employee transmission of illness.** |  |  |
| 1. Advise the facility to take the following actions (also in the facility checklists) to prevent employee transmission of illness:  * Staff members with symptoms of gastroenteritis should wait at least 48 hours after resolution of symptoms before returning to work.4,8 * Exclude non-essential staff, volunteers, etc. from working in areas experiencing norovirus outbreaks.8 | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. Establish protocols for staff cohorting in the event of a norovirus outbreak.   Staff should care for one patient/resident cohort on their ward and not move between patient cohorts (e.g., cohorts may include symptomatic, asymptomatic exposed, or asymptomatic unexposed patient/resident groups).4,8 Staff who have been exposed to or recently recovered from suspected norovirus may best be suited to care for symptomatic patients/residents until the outbreak resolves.8 | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. **Prevent visitors from spreading illness to residents/patients.** |  |  |
| 1. Advise the facility to take the following actions (also in the facility checklists) to prevent visitors from spreading illness to residents/patients.  * Restrict number of visitors to facilities with potential outbreaks, especially to units with affected patients/residents.4 * Ensure that those visiting ill persons wear gowns and wash their hands before and after visiting.4 * Caution visitors of ill patients/residents not to visit others until they are sure that they are not sick.4 * Restrict persons with recent symptoms of gastroenteritis from visiting the facility.4 | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. **Minimize transmission between residents/patients/children/patrons.** |  |  |
| 1. Advise the facility to take the following actions (also in the facility checklists) to minimize transmission:  * Restrict new admissions to a facility with an outbreak until the outbreak has ended.4 * Consider canceling group activities in a facility with an outbreak, especially activities with possible fomite transmission or where food is shared.4,8 * Temporarily suspend self-serve snacks in a common bowl for the duration of the outbreak.4 * Conduct health assessments for persons with gastroenteritis at their place of residence or in a separate area of the clinic to prevent others from getting ill.4 * Feed ill individuals in their rooms with disposable cutlery and dinnerware. If convalescing patients resist dining in their rooms, consider cohorting convalescing patients at tables together.4 * Isolate ill patients/residents from well patients/residents until at least 48 hours after resolution of symptoms.4,15 Either use single occupancy rooms or cohort ill patients together separate from asymptomatic patients/residents.2,8,11 * Wait until 48 hours after exposure before transferring exposed, asymptomatic persons to unaffected areas.2 | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. **Prevent transmission to other facilities.** |  |  |
| 1. Advise the facility to take the following actions (also in the facility checklists) to prevent transmission to other facilities:  * Suspend transfer of patients/residents from a facility experiencing an outbreak to another ward or facility until patients/residents have been symptom-free for at least 48 hours.2,4,8,15 * Inform staff that they should not report to work at any facility until at least 48 hours after resolution of symptoms.4 * If a patient/resident must be transferred (either symptomatic or asymptomatic), advise staff of the receiving facility to take appropriate precautions to prevent transmission to others.4 Use an interfacility transfer form for the patient.   *See the sample* [*Interfacility Transfer Form from the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department*](http://www.tpchd.org/files/library/31cde65bf389e653.pdf)*.*   * Medically suitable individuals recovering from norovirus (asymptomatic for at least 48 hours) can return to their place of residence.8 | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. **Environmental disinfection** |  |  |
| 1. Advise the facility to take the following actions to handle laundry safely:  * Individuals who handle soiled linens and clothes should wear disposable gloves and gowns and handle soiled linens and clothes as little as possible, minimizing agitation to prevent microbial contamination of the air.14 * Transport laundry in an enclosed and sanitary manner. * Promptly machine-wash soiled linens and clothes with a detergent in water at the maximum length cycle, and machine dry.14 | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. Advise the facility to take the following actions to clean and disinfect:  * For hard, nonporous environmental surfaces: See the poster “[Help Prevent the Spread of Norovirus (“Stomach Bug”)](http://www.disinfect-for-health.org/resources)”.   Clean by removing any visible organic contamination, followed by disinfection with a chlorine bleach solution or antimicrobial disinfectant approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as being effective against norovirus for environmental cleaning (see <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-g-epas-registered-antimicrobial-products-effective-against-norovirus>), with label claims for use in healthcare settings.2 This EPA list should be interpreted with caution because the efficacy of these products is tested on the surrogate feline calicivirus, not human norovirus. Therefore, chlorine bleach solutions should be used whenever possible.2 Use a concentration of 1000-5000ppm (5-25 tablespoons or approximately 1/3 to 1 ½ cups of household bleach [5.25%] per gallon of water) for at least 5 minutes, or according to product directions for norovirus outbreak control if not using household bleach.2 Following disinfection, rinse all surfaces intended for food or mouth contact or in child care/school settings with plain water before use.   * + Bleach solutions should be freshly prepared for use within 24 hours, or the target concentration should be doubled for storage and used within 30 days.2   + Particular attention should be paid to high-touch surfaces and areas of likely greatest environmental contamination, including but not limited to: bathrooms including toilets, showers, walls, floors, benches, faucets, etc.; doors; door knobs; hand rails; light switches; elevator buttons; telephones; computer equipment; tableware; flatware; reusable food storage containers; tables; chairs and chair backs; counters; shelves; equipment faces; kitchen preparation surfaces; equipment (e.g., microwaves, refrigerators) and ice machine interiors.2,4,8   + Kitchens should be closed, thoroughly cleaned in accordance with the aforementioned norovirus cleaning and disinfection methods, and then re-opened with a cleaning schedule as part of the kitchen operation plan developed with the regulatory authority after the LHJ verifies that the cleaning is adequate, the proper foods have been removed, and food workers are well. When the building is norovirus-free, routine cleaning can resume.   + Chlorine bleach or EPA-approved products for norovirus should be used to clean on a routine basis (i.e., twice daily ward/unit level cleaning and disinfection of patient/resident care areas, with frequently touched surfaces cleaned and disinfected three times daily).12 * For carpets and other porous surfaces: use steam cleaning or an EPA approved cleaner. Disinfection with bleach may discolor carpets or fabric. * Persons cleaning areas heavily contaminated with vomit or feces should wear appropriate protective barriers (e.g., latex gloves – and if splashing is possible, a mask or face shield and garments such as a uniform, jumpsuit or gown to protect street clothing) and perform disposal in a prompt manner that prevents transfer of this material to other surfaces or persons.14 | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |