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|  DOH 420-175 | **Norovirus Outbreak Control Checklist for Local Health Jurisdictions: General** |

The following checklist is intended to help guide local health jurisdictions (LHJs) responding to potential norovirus outbreaks. 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/5100/420-171-NoroFacilityChecklistGeneral.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.*
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| 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).
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| 1. **Communication.** *See sample* [*communication framework*](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/420-177-NoroCommunicationsFramework.xlsx)*.*
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| 1. Report suspected or confirmed outbreak to CDE.
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| 1. Advise the facility to take the following actions (also in the facility checklists) to educate staff, visitors, patients/residents, and parents, as applicable to the setting, about the importance of following outbreak control activities:
* Provide periodic briefings to staff 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 staff, new ill customers, public vomiting/fecal accidents, handwashing sinks that need to be stocked, etc.4
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| 1. If the outbreak is in healthcare or long-term care facility, work with the facility to ensure the following:
* Facility administration and infection control team are aware of the possible outbreak.11
* 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)*.*
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| 1. If the outbreak is in a child care facility such as a school or day care, work with the facility to ensure parents and guardians are aware of the outbreak and norovirus control measures, such as by disseminating a child care notification alert and [*Norovirus Guidance for Parents*.](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/420-181-NoroParentsGuidance.docx)
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| 1. **Monitor the outbreak.**
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| 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.
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| 1. If the outbreak is in any setting *except* a food service setting: 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*](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/420-178-NoroCaseReportWorksheet.xlsx) *for sample form the facility could submit.*
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| 1. If the outbreak is in a food service setting: decide what information on infected individuals is needed to determine the source of the outbreak (e.g., infection individual’s location, date/time of onset, any meal details, etc.). Instruct the facility to *immediately* report to the LHJ any incidence of a customer possibly getting ill from the facility, along with any time a food service worker gets sick when there is a potential outbreak at the establishment. *See* [*case report worksheet*](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/420-178-NoroCaseReportWorksheet.xlsx) *for sample form the facility could submit.*
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| 1. If seeking collaboration with CDE for outbreak investigation, send the line list of infected individuals to CDE as requested.
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| 1. **Identify and eliminate common sources of transmission.**
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| 1. Determine which foods that may have been contaminated need to be removed from service for holding, testing, or discarding, which may include items such 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.
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| 1. If the outbreak is in any setting except a food service establishment or child care facility: 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
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| 1. If the setting is a food service establishment, consider closing the facility for 24-48 hours to allow for adequate cleaning and sanitizing, removal of contaminated foods, food worker healing, and investigation, after which the facility can open under regular operation.
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| 1. If the setting is a child care facility, consider advising the facility to discontinue or modify food service and to have the children bring food from home for the duration of the outbreak.
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| 1. **Prevent personnel from becoming infected.**
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| 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.
* In healthcare or long term care facility, provide personal protective equipment (PPE) (gowns, gloves, and masks) to staff.4
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| * If the setting is not a food service establishment, 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, in healthcare or long term care facilities, 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 – if available – masks when cleaning areas grossly contaminated by feces or vomit.
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| 1. **Prevent employee transmission of illness.**
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| 1. For facilities that are not food service establishments, 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
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| 1. For food service establishments, advise the facility to exclude or restrict food employee work per the following regulations and guidance:
* According to the Washington State Retail Food Code, the onset of an apparent foodborne disease outbreak constitutes an imminent health hazard.13 As such, during a norovirus disease outbreak, the LHJ (or regulatory authority) can require staff exclusion based on either symptoms (vomiting/diarrhea) or diagnosis, and the LHJ (or regulatory authority) determines the length of exclusion and the conditions for removal of exclusion.
* In addition, if a food worker does not have norovirus symptoms but works with a highly susceptible population and meets any of the following conditions:
	+ consumed or prepared food implicated in a confirmed disease outbreak,
	+ attended or worked in a setting where there is a confirmed disease outbreak
	+ lives in the same household as someone who works at or attended a setting where there is a confirmed disease outbreak,
	+ lives in the same household as or consumed food prepared by a person who is infected or ill with Enterohemorrhagic or Shiga Toxin-producing *Escherichia coli*, Shigella, Salmonella typhi, or Hepatitis A virus or jaundice

The regulatory authority may restrict the activities of a food employee so that there is no risk of transmitting norovirus and the food employee does not work with exposed food, clean equipment, utensils, or linens; and unwrapped single-service or single-use articles.13* It is recommended that staff wait at least 48 hours after resolution of symptoms before returning to work.8
* The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advise that food employees not prepare food for others while sick and for 2-3 days after recovery.2,14
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| 1. In long term or health care settings and cruise ships, 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.10 | □ | \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |
| 1. **Long-term or health care facilities: Prevent visitors from spreading illness to residents/patients.**
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| 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
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| 1. **In settings that are not food service establishments, minimize transmission between residents/patients/children/patrons.**
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| 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 (e.g., separate area of school 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
* By Washington State regulation ([WAC 170-295-3030](http://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=170-295-3030)), children may not return to school or day care facilities until 24 hours after resolution of diarrhea. During a norovirus outbreak, it may be appropriate to exclude children with norovirus from child care facilities for more than 24 hours (e.g., 48 or 72 hours) after resolution of diarrhea, as determined by the LHJ. *See* [*Norovirus Guidance for Parents*](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/420-181-NoroParentsGuidance.docx)*.*
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| * In health or long-term care facilities (or overnight camps or boarding schools if a person ill with norovirus does not return home): 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
* In long-term or health care facilities, wait until 48 hours after exposure before transferring exposed, asymptomatic persons to unaffected areas.2
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| 1. **Long-term or health care facilities: Prevent transmission to other facilities.**
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| 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
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| 1. **Environmental disinfection**
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| 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
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| 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>). 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.
	+ In healthcare settings:
		- 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).8
		- Cleaning products and disinfectants should be EPA-registered and have label claims for use in health-care settings.2
* 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
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