



Newsletter

February 2017
Issue 14, Vol. 1



Prevent the Spread
of **Norovirus**

Nursing Talk

AND MORE...

Prevent the Spread of **Norovirus**



Norovirus causes many people to become ill with vomiting and diarrhea each year. You can help protect yourself and others by washing your hands often and following simple tips to stay healthy.

Noroviruses are a group of related viruses that can cause gastroenteritis (GAS-tro-en-ter-i-tis), which is inflammation of the stomach and intestines. This leads to cramping, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Norovirus Is the Most Common Cause of Gastroenteritis in the U.S.

CDC estimates that each year Norovirus causes 19 to 21 million illnesses, 56,000 to 71,000 hospitalizations and 570 to 800 deaths. Anyone can get infected with norovirus and you can get it more than once. It is estimated that a person will get norovirus about 5 times during their lifetime. Many people usually get sick with norovirus in cooler months, especially from November to April.

Norovirus spreads quickly. It is found in the vomit and stool of infected people. You can get it by:

- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus

- Touching surfaces or objects with norovirus on them and then putting your hand or fingers in your mouth
- Having direct contact with a person who is infected with norovirus, for example, when caring for someone with norovirus or sharing foods or eating utensils with them

People with norovirus illness are contagious from the moment they begin feeling sick and for the first few days after they recover. Some people may be contagious for even longer. There is no vaccine to prevent norovirus infection or drug to treat sick people. Learn how to protect yourself and others by following a few simple steps.

Protect Yourself and Others from Norovirus

- **Practice proper hand hygiene**
Wash your hands carefully with soap and water, especially after using the toilet and changing diapers and always before eating or preparing food. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. These

alcohol-based products can help reduce the number of germs on your hands, but they are not a substitute for washing with soap and water.

Norovirus Symptoms

Common symptoms:

- cramping
- nausea
- vomiting
- diarrhea

Less common symptoms:

- low-grade fever
- chills
- headache
- muscle aches
- fatigue

- **Take care in the kitchen**
Carefully rinse fruits and vegetables, and cook oysters and other shellfish thoroughly before eating.
- **Do not prepare food while infected**
People with norovirus illness should

THAT AIN'T CHICKEN FEED!

Dear Cassandra,

The September, 2016 issue of the **American Home Health Newsletter** contained an article about a referral bonus being offered starting 08/03/2016 and running indefinitely. The agency was offering a \$1,000 referral bonus to any employee who refers an employee who satisfactorily completes 480 hours or 320 visits (orientation hours not included). A thousand dollars is a lot of money! Is this for real? Why would the agency do this?

Incredulous in Inverness

Dear Incredulous,

You are right. A thousand dollars ain't chicken feed. It is no small amount of money. It is a significant investment in recruiting quality employees.

According to the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), one out of two employers offer a referral bonus. Approximately 25% of all new hires are the result of a referral bonus program. In some companies, these referral bonus programs are restricted to hard-to-fill positions. In other companies, the referral bonus programs apply to all jobs.

Even the United States government has a referral bonus program for hard-to-fill positions. These may be jobs that require technical knowledge or special expertise in a field.

Now think about this. Would you refer a person you knew was a troublemaker, a slacker, a drug addict, a whiner? When you refer someone, your reputation is on the line, too. When the troublemaker, slacker, drug addict, and/or whiner got fired, what would your fellow employees say? It is only logical that you would only refer someone that you thought would be a great employee, an asset to the company.

On the plus side, you, as a nurse, probably know more nurses than the ordinary citizen. You know nurses who are working in hospitals. You know nurses who are work-

Prevent the Spread of **Norovirus**

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not prepare food for others while they have symptoms and for at least 2 days after they recover from their illness. Also see For Food Workers: Norovirus and Working with Food.

- **Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces**

After throwing up or having diarrhea, immediately clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces using a bleach-based household cleaner as directed on the product label. If no such cleaning product is available, you can use a solution made with 5 tablespoons to 1.5 cups of household bleach per 1 gallon of water.

- **Wash laundry thoroughly**

Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with vomit or stool. Handle soiled items carefully—try not to shake them—to avoid spreading virus. If available, wear rubber or disposable gloves while handling soiled clothing or linens and wash your hands after handling. Wash soiled items with detergent at the maximum available cycle length and then machine dry.

Common Norovirus Outbreak Settings

Norovirus spreads quickly from person to person in enclosed places like nursing homes, daycare centers, schools, and cruise ships. It is also a major cause of outbreaks in restaurants and catered-meal settings if contaminated food is served.

Many Names, Same Symptoms

You may hear norovirus illness called “food poisoning” or “stomach flu.” Norovirus can cause foodborne illness, as can other germs and chemicals.

Norovirus illness is not related to the flu (influenza). Though they may share some of the same symptoms, the flu is a respiratory illness caused by influenza virus.

For most people norovirus illness is not serious and they get better in 1 to 3 days. But it can be serious in young children, the elderly, and people with other health conditions. It can lead to severe dehydration, hospitalization and even death. To learn more about dehydration and how to prevent and treat it see norovirus treatment. [<http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/about/treatment.html>]

More Information

1. Norovirus Infographics, Video and other Multimedia Items
2. CDC Vital Signs – Preventing Norovirus Outbreaks, June 2014
3. CDC Norovirus web site
4. Norovirus Treatment
5. Norovirus Trends and Outbreaks
6. For Food Handlers: Norovirus and Working with Food
7. Norovirus in Healthcare Settings, general information on norovirus and prevention in healthcare facilities
8. Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives, hand- and water-related hygiene tips
9. Six Tips to Help Prevent the Spread of Norovirus [04:09 minutes]
10. Norovirus in the United States [08:46 minutes]
11. Put Your Hands Together [03:48 minutes], information on how to help stop the spread of infection and stay healthy
12. Foodborne Burden
13. Tips for Healthy Cruising
14. CDC's Vessel Sanitation Program
15. Epidemiology of Foodborne Norovirus Outbreaks, United States, 2001–2008. *Emerg Infect Dis* [Internet]. 2012 Oct

Note: To access the above resources, please go to the link below.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/features/norovirus/index.html>

Flu Symptoms

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Influenza (also known as the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The flu is different from a cold. The flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

** It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.*

Flu Complications

Most people who get influenza will recover in a few days to less than two weeks, but some

In children

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In addition to the signs above, get medical help right away for any infant who has any of these signs:

- Being unable to eat
- Has trouble breathing
- Has no tears when crying
- Significantly fewer wet diapers than normal

people will develop complications (such as pneumonia) as a result of the flu, some of which can be life-threatening and result in death.

Pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus and ear infections are examples of complications from flu. The flu can make chronic health problems worse. For example, people with asthma may experience asthma attacks while they have the flu, and people with chronic congestive heart failure may experience worsening of this condition that is triggered by the flu.

People at High Risk from Flu

Anyone can get the flu (even healthy people), and serious problems related to the flu can happen at any age, but some people are at high risk of developing serious flu-related complications if they get sick. This includes people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and young children.

In adults

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

ing in nursing homes. You know nurses who are working private duty nursing. You know nurses who will soon retire. You know nurses who have already retired. Among all of these nurses, there surely are some that might be interested in pediatric private duty nursing.

Who would be a good fit for the company? Who has the skills and experience to do private duty nursing? Is the person dependable and reliable? What rate of pay would the person be expecting? Does the person need benefits such as health insurance?

Before you talk to someone about working for the company, think about creative work schedules. Could someone work just three days a week every week? Would a person prefer to work every day of the week on alternate weeks? Would someone prefer to work four days a week instead of five days a week?

Be prepared to describe your company. How old is it? How many employees does it have? What types of clients, adults as well as children, does the company have? What is the funding source for the agency? Is it accredited by the Joint Commission? Where is its main office? Look at the Employee Handbook online for answers.

I assume that you are proud to work for American Home Health. Let this pride and enthusiasm show when you are talking to a prospective employee. You are offering the prospective employee an opportunity to be a part of an established, respected, dynamic organization.

Remember that you don't need to know all the answers to the questions. You are just referring the person to the company. Human Resources will be happy to meet with the candidate to provide specific information. The Client Service Coordinators would be delighted to talk with the candidate on the phone or in the office to offer cases available within twenty-five miles of the candidate's home.

According to the September 2016 newsletter article called "REFERRAL BONUS," the applicant MUST indicate on the application the name of the referring employee. The bonus will be paid the first pay period after the referred employee completes the requirements. The referring employee has to be actively working for American Home Health in order to participate. The refer-

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Flu Symptoms

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Flu vs Cold

Signs and Symptoms	Influenza	Cold
Symptom onset	Abrupt	Gradual
Fever	Usual; lasts 3-4 days	Rare
Aches	Usual; often severe	Slight
Chills	Fairly common	Uncommon
Fatigue, weakness	Usual	Sometimes
Sneezing	Sometimes	Common
Stuffy nose	Sometimes	Common
Sore throat	Sometimes	Common
Chest discomfort, cough	Common; can be severe	Mild to moderate; hacking cough
Headache	Common	Rare

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/consumer/symptoms.htm>

Nursing Talk

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ring employee has to be actively working for American Home Health when the bonus is paid. The bonus is subject to taxation.

Now the ball is in your court. Here's your opportunity to recruit a quality employee for the agency and earn \$1,000 for your effort. I know you can do it!

Cassandra

We invite you to submit questions for this column. E-mail edward.lara@ahhc-1.com.

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