Norovirus
Employee and Family Member Fact Sheet

Cause and Transmission: Transmission Fecal-Oral route. The term norovirus was recently approved as the official name for a group of viruses causing “stomach flu” or gastroenteritis. A more familiar term is Norwalk virus. Like all viral infections, noroviruses are not affected by treatment with antibiotics, and cannot grow outside a person’s body.

Symptoms: Symptoms usually include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and some stomach cramping. There may be low grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches and fatigue. There is a sudden onset of symptoms but the illness is self-limiting. The symptoms can last from 24 to 60 hours.

Incubation Period: Symptoms may begin within 12 to 48 hours after ingesting the virus and may have a sudden onset.

Period of Communicability: People infected with Norovirus are contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill to at least three days after recovery. Some people remain contagious for up to two weeks after recovery.

Prevention of Transmission: Infected persons should not prepare food while they have symptoms and for three days after they recover from the illness. Dispose of contaminated food promptly. Use good hand washing technique before and after preparing food or eating and when changing diapers. Carefully wash fruits and vegetables and steam oysters before eating. Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness by using a 10% bleach solution. Also routinely clean bathrooms and food preparation areas after use with the bleach solution to help prevent the virus from spreading to others. Remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with virus. Use hot water and soap to wash clothes and linens. Flush or discard any emesis and/or stool and assure the bathroom is kept clean. Both vomitus and stool are infectious.

What to Do: There is no long term health effect related to the illness. Dehydration may result from an inability to replace enough fluids lost through vomiting and diarrhea. The very young or the elderly or those with a weakened immune system may experience dehydration. Persons with co-morbid conditions may experience an exacerbation of one or more underlying conditions. Drink oral replacement fluids, water or juice to prevent dehydration.

Work Status: Do not come to work if you are having symptoms. Employees need to be symptom free (no fevers, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea) for at least 72 hours before they are allowed to return to work. Vigilant hand hygiene needs to be strictly adhered to for up to 2 weeks following an infection, as some virus shedding may continue during this time.

Family Members / Household Contacts: Follow same precautions as above.