

Media Release

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Prevention is the key to Reducing the Spread of Norovirus

In response to illness resembling Norovirus that has been affecting many people across eastern Ontario, the Health Unit's message is simple: ***Stay home if you are ill and remain there until you've been symptom-free for 48 hours.***

This virus is a major cause of gastroenteritis in children and adults and can cause outbreaks in nursing homes, hospitals, schools, day care centres and food premises. The symptoms of norovirus illness usually include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping.

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit is reminding residents to be cautious and to limit the spread of gastro-intestinal illnesses through good hygiene and staying home when sick. **While the symptoms usually do not last more than two or three days, a person can still pass the virus to others for up to 48 hours after symptoms have disappeared.**

How do people become infected with noroviruses?

Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected people. People can become infected with the virus in several ways, including:

- eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus;
- touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus, and then placing their hand in their mouth;
- having direct contact with another person who is infected and showing symptoms (for example, when caring for someone with illness, or sharing foods or eating utensils with someone who is ill).

How you can prevent the spread of the illness?

There are three easy ways to prevent the spread of Norovirus:

1. Careful handwashing has been recognized as the most important prevention measure that you can take to protect yourself. Practice good and frequent handwashing particularly before meal preparation and eating, as well as, after using the washroom. Wash hands vigorously with soap and water for at least 15 seconds, ensuring that all parts of the hands have been cleaned.
2. Carefully disinfect inanimate objects like tabletops, phones, bathrooms etc. with which the ill person may have had contact with.
3. If you get sick with Norovirus symptoms, stay home until you have been symptom-free for 48 hours. Don't visit patients in local hospitals and long-term care facilities, and avoid all social events and public places. While many people tend to feel better sooner, the illness can still be spread within 48 hours since the last symptom.

For more information, contact the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit at 1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685 or visit www.healthunit.org.