

Health Advisory for parents

Benton County Health Department has received reports of clusters of people with similar symptoms of stomach and intestinal illness. Reported symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramping. Although laboratory tests are still pending, these symptoms are consistent with Norovirus – sometimes called the “cruise ship virus”.

Norovirus illness often begins suddenly, and the infected person may feel very sick. The illness is usually brief, with symptoms lasting only about 1 or 2 days. In general, children experience more vomiting than adults.

These viruses are very contagious and are easily passed from person-to-person through infected stool and vomit. A sick person may shed the virus for 72 hours (3 days) after the last diarrhea or vomiting.

If a child is sick with these symptoms, keep them at home for 72 hours after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhea.

How to protect yourself and others:

Disinfect surfaces and door knobs touched by the sick person and bathroom areas. To do this, wipe them with a bleach solution each time they’ve been touched. Toys need to be soaked in a bleach solution for 15 seconds and then air dried.

Use a strong bleach solution with 1/3 cup of bleach in one gallon of water. (This strong solution may spot or discolor carpets, clothing and toys.) Disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizers are **not** strong enough to kill Noroviruses.

Wash your hands after all contact with sick person. Use soap and warm water for 20 seconds to protect family members and yourself.

CARE OF THE SICK PERSON:

It is very important to replace fluids lost by vomiting and diarrhea. Dehydration is the most serious health effect that can result from norovirus infection.

Infants, small children, and the elderly are at a greater risk of becoming dehydrated and should be given juice or water on a continual basis throughout the illness. Popsicles and clear soups also are an easy way to give liquids. If the sick person cannot keep liquid down and is getting worse, call your doctor or take him/her to an immediate or urgent care clinic.

Do not take your sick child to public gatherings, to a child care center or have visitors in your home until 72 hours have passed since the last episode of vomiting or diarrhea. Another household member who is exposed to this virus usually will also get sick within 2 days.

Norovirus infection cannot be treated with antibiotics. This is because antibiotics work to fight bacteria and not viruses.

For more information: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/gastro/norovirus.htm>