



Norovirus and the Entrepreneur:

How can I protect my business?



Reasons for Concern

- **Norovirus presents a HIGH risk for food contamination & customer illness**
 - The CDC estimates that norovirus is the leading cause of foodborne illness in the U.S.
 - Transmission is commonly through the fecal-oral route through contaminated food
- **Norovirus is DIFFICULT to eliminate from the premises**



Before the Incident...

What Can you do?

Focus on Prevention

- **Consider an employee health policy that addresses norovirus**
- **Practice proper handwashing**
- **Prohibit bare hand contact with RTE food**
- **Decontaminate areas contaminated with norovirus**

Employee Health Policy

- **Rule .2616(d) of the NC Food Safety Rules**
 - “No employee who has a communicable...disease that can be transmitted by foods, or who is a carrier...shall work in a food service establishment in any capacity in which there is a likelihood of...contaminating food.”
- **Main Components of an effective Employee Health Policy for norovirus:**
 - **Reporting**
 - **Exclusion and Restriction**



Employee Health Policy (cont.)

- **Require employees (and conditional employees) to report the following:**
 - **Symptoms** (regardless of norovirus diagnosis)
 - Vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Sore throat with fever
 - **Diagnosis of norovirus**
 - **Exposure to norovirus within the past 48 hours**

Employee Health Policy (cont.)

- **Exclude an employee from the establishment if:**
 - **Symptomatic with vomiting and diarrhea**
 - **Diagnosed with norovirus**
- **Restrict an employee from working with food if:**
 - **Symptomatic with sore throat and fever**
 - **Diagnosed with norovirus but is asymptomatic** (without the help of medication)

Employee Health Policy (cont.)

- **If your establishment serves a highly susceptible population then:**
 - **Exclude an employee that has been**
 - **diagnosed with norovirus but is asymptomatic**
 - **symptomatic with sore throat and fever**
- **Restrict an employee from working with food if**
 - **exposed to norovirus**
- **Highly Susceptible Populations:**
 - **young, elderly, pregnant, or immunocompromised**
 - **Examples: nursing homes, hospitals, child care centers**

Employee Health Policy (cont.)

Lifting the Exclusion or Restriction

- If the employee was **excluded** for being **symptomatic**:
 - **Restrict** from working with food for 24 hours after becoming asymptomatic
 - Retain the **exclusion** for 24 hours after becoming asymptomatic if serving a HSP

Employee Health Policy (cont.)

Lifting the Exclusion or Restriction

- **Reinstate an employee when:**
 - **Written medical documentation from a health practitioner is provided that states that the employee is free of norovirus**
 - **the employee has been free of symptoms for more than 48 hours**

Proper Handwashing

- **Wash hands the correct way**

- use liquid soap and tempered water
- rub hands vigorously with soap and tempered water for 15 seconds
- wash all surfaces of the hands, to include the backs of hands, palms, wrists, under fingernails and between fingers
- rinse well for ten seconds
- dry hands with a **paper towel** or other hand-drying device
- turn off faucet with a paper towel or other method without recontaminating hands.

- **Wash hands often**

- **Avoid hindrances to clean hands**

- **rings**
- **bracelets**
- **long fingernails**





Avoid Bare Hand Contact with RTE Foods

- **The viral transfer rate from contaminated hands to RTE food is 10%**
- **Handwashing will not remove all pathogens present**
- **Use handwashing in conjunction with gloves and/or clean & sanitized utensils**
 - **Use gloves in the correct manner!**

Lodging Establishments

- **Employee Health Policy**
 - **Sick employees can contaminate surfaces in rooms, such as handrails, walls, curtains, toilet areas (e.g. cruise ships)**
 - **Require all employees to report symptoms or diagnosis**
- **Practice proper handwashing**

During the Incident...

Decreasing the spread of the virus

Focus on “Hot Spots”

- **Maintain clean restroom areas to prevent the potential for cross contamination**
- **Emphasize hand washing for all employees-wait and bus staff also**
- **Install supplemental hand wash signs in restrooms to encourage customers**
- **Install hand sanitizer stations in the dining area and close to children’s play areas- emphasize use with signs**



Focus on “Hot Spots” (cont.)

- **Monitor the customer self-service areas (e.g. buffet bar) to prevent contamination or eliminate self-service**
- **Consider wrapping ready-to-eat items individually to reduce the chance of transmission**
- **Change serving utensils often**
- **Ensure thorough cleaning and sanitization of plates, tableware, utensils, etc.**
- **Wash raw fruits & vegetables thoroughly**



Focus on “Hot Spots” (cont.)

- **Repeated daily disinfection of heavy hand-contact areas/surfaces**

- **Discard and remove from premises all dirty cloths/hand towels used to clean (suspected) contaminated areas**



After the Incident...

Decontamination of your business

Focus on Decontamination

- **Vomitus and Feces Contamination**
 - **Dispose of all exposed food within 25 feet of the contamination**
 - **Dispose of any food prepared by an ill employee**
 - **Wear protective barriers, such as disposable gloves, masks, & aprons**

Focus on Decontamination (cont.)

- **Vomitus and Feces** (cont.)
 - **Use paper towels to soak up as much of the contaminated material as possible**
 - **Be careful not to drip or splash the material**
 - **Clean & disinfect the entire food preparation area with disposable cloths.**

Focus on Decontamination (cont.)

- **Vomitus and Feces** (cont.)

- **Clean & disinfect** the soiled area with a chlorine/water mixture:

- **Stainless steel, food/mouth contact items: 200 ppm (1:250) or 1 tablespoon of bleach in 1 gallon of water**

- **Non-porous surfaces such as tile floors, countertops, sinks, etc.: 1000 ppm (1:50) or 1/3 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water**

- **Porous surfaces such as wooden floors: 5000 ppm (1:10) or 1 2/3 cups of bleach in 1 gallon of water**



Focus on Decontamination (cont.)

- **Vomitus and Feces** (cont.)
 - **Contact Time:** Leave bleach solution on the surface for **10-20 minutes**, and then rinse with clean water.
 - **Dispose of all waste material in sealed plastic bags.**
 - **Do not remove waste through the food prep area, if possible.**

Focus on Decontamination (cont.)

- **Vomitus and Feces** (cont.)
- **After the disinfection process is complete, close off the area, if possible, for at least one hour.**
- **If there are windows, air out the area.**
- **Wash and sanitize hands thoroughly before resuming work.**

Focus on Decontamination (cont.)

- **Vomitus and Feces** (cont.)
- **Carpeted Areas:**
 - Remove all visible debris with absorbent material and discard in a plastic bag to minimize aerosols.
 - Steam clean the carpet to **160°F for five minutes or 212°F for 1 minute** for complete inactivation of the virus.
 - Wear protective barriers, such as disposable gloves, masks, & aprons

Lodging Establishments

- **Once norovirus has been identified, guests who become ill should be requested to stay in their rooms and contact the front desk by phone.**
- **Rooms that have accommodated ill guests should be thoroughly cleaned as soon as the guests/residents depart.**
- **Non-visibly soiled areas should be disinfected with chlorine bleach.**

Lodging Establishments (cont.)

The following items should be regularly disinfected:

- Doorknobs
- faucets
- sinks
- toilets
- commodes,
- bath rails
- phones
- counters
- chairs (including backs)
- remotes
- tables
- handrails
- elevator buttons
- light switches
- mattress covers
- aprons
- uniforms
- linens
- bedding
- ice machines



Lodging Establishments (cont.)

- **When norovirus is present, housekeepers should wear gloves, remove them, dispose of them, and wash their hands before going to the next room.**
- **All windows and doors should be opened during cleaning.**

Lodging Establishments (cont.)

- **Contaminated bed coverings should be sanitized by ordinary laundry processing.**
- **Mattresses should be thoroughly aired in bright sunlight. Soft furnishings should be placed in bright sunlight for a few hours.**
- **All mattresses and soft furnishings contaminated by vomit should be removed for steam cleaning or discarded.**

Lodging Establishments (cont.)

- **Bathrooms**
 - **Clean every hour**
 - **Disinfect with an agent approved for norovirus**
 - **Use disposable cloths**
 - **Provide ventilation to the outside**
- **Towels & Linens**
 - **Wash in 50 ppm chlorine/water solution or EPA listed laundry sanitizer OR**
 - **160° F hot water for 25 minutes**

Contact Information

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