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
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
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-visoribly soiled areas should be disinfected with chlorine bleach.
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.
• 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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