



SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

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www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org

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Dear Parents:

Every year, especially during cold weather months, facilities throughout Georgia experience outbreaks of viral gastroenteritis, and this season is no exception. Viral gastroenteritis, characterized by vomiting and diarrhea, is often caused by infections with noroviruses or related viruses. In recent weeks, schools in our district have been experiencing clusters of such illness in students and staff. Noroviruses are very contagious and can spread rapidly in such environments.

During school outbreaks, many students may become ill, which can result in disruptions to lesson plans and scheduled activities. Further, if the disease spreads through school faculty, staffing shortages can result. Therefore, it is important to prevent outbreaks or to recognize outbreaks early so that action can be taken to limit the impact.

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)

Symptoms of norovirus illness usually begin about 24 to 48 hours after ingestion of the virus, but they can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure. Symptoms usually include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramping. Other symptoms that sometimes occur include a low grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches and general tiredness.

If you suspect an outbreak of viral gastroenteritis, please contact your County Health Department for assistance in assessing and controlling the outbreak.

Southwest Health District can provide information about norovirus prevention and control in schools. Additional information is available on-line at www.southwestpublichealth.org or www.cdc.gov.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline H. Grant, MD, MPH, MPA
Southwest Health District Health Director

cc: County Nurse Managers

Baker	Calhoun	Colquitt	Decatur	Dougherty	Early	Grady
Lee	Miller	Mitchell	Seminole	Terrell	Thomas	Worth