



# New Hampshire Health Alert Network

## Health.Alert@nh.gov

**Status:** Actual  
**Message Type:** Alert  
**Severity:** Moderate  
**Sensitive:** Not Sensitive  
**Message Identifier:** NH-HAN #20120127 Norovirus Update for Schools and Childcare Settings 2012  
**Delivery Time:** 12 hours  
**Acknowledgement:** No  
**Originating Agency:** NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services

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**DATE:** January 27, 2012

**TIME:** 1600 EST

**TO:** School Nurses and Administrators, Childcare Centers, Manchester Health Department, Nashua Health Department, Health Officers, Post-Secondary Schools, MMRS, MRC, Public Health Networks EWIDS, DHHS Outbreak Team, DPHS Investigation Team, and DPHS Management Team

**FROM:** Sharon Alroy-Preis, MD, MPH, NH State Epidemiologist

**SUBJECT:** Norovirus Update for Schools and Childcare Settings 2012

### **NH Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) recommends:**

- Increased awareness and vigilance for outbreaks of gastroenteritis in schools and childcare settings, which may be caused by norovirus
- Strict adherence to infection control practices during a suspected outbreak
- Timely reporting of all suspected outbreaks to the NH DHHS Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496 (after hours 1-800-852-3345 ext.5300)

### **Background:**

Since December 1, 2011, NH DHHS has investigated 39 reports of gastroenteritis outbreaks, predominantly reported from healthcare facilities, though several recent reports have come from schools and childcare settings. Most of these outbreaks have a confirmed cause of norovirus, a common viral infection in the United States. Noroviruses are highly communicable and can be transmitted in a number of ways including person-to-person contact, consumption of contaminated food and water, airborne droplets of vomit, and contact with contaminated surfaces. Symptoms normally last 12-60 hours and commonly include vomiting and diarrhea. Primary symptoms may be accompanied by abdominal cramps, nausea, fever or headache, which usually resolve within 48 hours.

### **Infection Control Recommendations during an Outbreak:**

1. Promptly clean areas contaminated with vomit and feces and follow up disinfection with freshly prepared 0.1% (1000 ppm) hypochlorite solution (5 tablespoons bleach per gallon water).
2. Review kitchen hygiene practices and health status of all food workers, exclude any symptomatic food handlers from work until 48 hours after the resolution of symptoms.
3. Assess health status of students and staff and exclude all symptomatic individuals from school/work until full recovery.
4. Practice frequent hand washing and gloving by all food workers in the facility.
5. Practice frequent hand washing by all students and staff.

6. Use gloves and aprons whenever contact with an infected individual or contaminated environment is anticipated.
7. Wash hands after contact with infected individuals, on leaving affected areas or before handling food or drinks.
8. Clean soiled carpets and soft furnishings with hot water and detergent or steam clean; avoid vacuum cleaning.
9. Clean frequently handled objects such as door handles and railings.

Visit the CDC website for additional information including a checklist for schools when an outbreak of gastroenteritis is suspected: <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Topics/norovirus.htm>

**Reporting of Suspected Outbreaks:**

Individual cases of norovirus are not reportable in New Hampshire unless suspected to be part of an outbreak. To report suspected outbreaks, call the Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496 (toll free at 800-852-3345, ext. 4496). After hours, call 800-852-3345, ext. 5300, and ask for the public health professional on call. The public health professional will discuss appropriate management of the suspected outbreak and provide prevention recommendations.

**Attachment: Norovirus Fact Sheet**

<http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/documents/norovirus.pdf>

**For any questions regarding the contents of this message, please contact  
NH DHHS Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496.  
For after hours / toll free, call 1-800-852-3345, ext. 4496.**

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## DEFINITION OF TERMS AND ALERTING VOCABULARY

### Message Type

Alert: Original alert  
Update: Prior alert has been updated and superseded  
Cancel: Prior alert has been cancelled  
Error: Prior alert has been retracted

### Status

Actual: Refers to a live event  
Exercise: Designated recipients must respond to the communication or alert  
Test: Related to a technical and/or system test

### Severity

Extreme: Extraordinary threat to life or property  
Severe: Significant threat to life or property  
Moderate: Possible threat to life or property  
Minor: Minimal threat to life or property  
Unknown: Unknown threat to life or property

### Sensitive

Sensitive: Indicates the alert contains sensitive content  
Not Sensitive: Indicates non-sensitive content

### Message Identifier

A unique alert identifier that is generated upon alert activation

### Delivery Time

Indicates the time frame for the delivery of the alert

### Acknowledgement

Indicates whether an acknowledgement on the part of the recipient is required to confirm that the alert was received, and the time frame in which a response is required.

### Originating Agency

A guaranteed unique identifier for the agency originating the alert.

### Alerting Program

The program sending the alert or engaging in alerts and communications using PHIN Communication and Alerting (PCA) as a vehicle for their delivery.

**You have received this message based upon the information contained within our emergency notification database.**

**If you have a different or additional e-mail or fax address that you would prefer to be used, please contact:**

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**Business Hours: 8 AM – 4 PM**  
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