

November 28, 2016

Norovirus illness is common at this time of year

Over the past few days, media has reported a number of norovirus-like outbreaks with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea and nausea. Norovirus, often referred to as the “stomach flu”, is a very contagious viral illness that is usually not severe, comes on quickly and normally resolves in 24 to 48 hours.

York Region Public Health can confirm that two York Region schools, one in the Town of East Gwillimbury and one in the City of Markham, have tested positive for norovirus. York Region Public Health actively works with facilities experiencing outbreaks to implement control measures, such as increased cleaning and disinfection.

As seen with Thornhill Woods Public School, these control measures effectively reduced student absenteeism by 50 per cent over a few days.

To lower the spread of norovirus within our communities:

- Anyone experiencing symptoms should continue to stay home for at least 48 hours after symptoms stop
- Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water, especially after using the toilet or changing diapers and before preparing, handling and eating food
- Wear gloves when cleaning up vomit or diarrhea. Contaminated surfaces must first be scrubbed using detergent and water and then disinfected. To disinfect a contaminated surface, create a chlorine bleach solution by mixing one cup (250 ml) of bleach in nine cups (2.25L) of water
- Remove and wash clothes and linens that may be contaminated with vomit or feces
- Keep sick individuals out of areas where food is being handled or prepared
- Anyone who is sick should not handle or prepare food for at least 48 hours after symptoms stop



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York Region Health Connection

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Norovirus and influenza are different

Norovirus is not related to influenza, or “the flu”, a respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus which commonly starts circulating during the fall and into spring.

Symptoms of influenza include:

- Sudden onset of headache
- Fever (over 38 degrees Celsius or 100 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Muscle aches and fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Runny nose
- Chills
- Sore throat
- Cough

Most people recover from the flu within a week to 10 days, but some people, including those 65 years of age or older, healthy pregnant women and adults and children with chronic health conditions are at greater risk of becoming ill and developing severe health problems such as pneumonia.

You and your family can reduce your chances of getting the flu by:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available. Handwashing is especially important after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
- Coughing and sneezing into your sleeve or a tissue, not your hand and throwing away used tissues immediately
- Getting the seasonal flu shot for anyone six months of age or older. It is especially important for people 65 years of age or older, healthy pregnant women and adults and children with chronic health conditions
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick
- Not touching your face
- Regularly cleaning and disinfecting common surfaces

For more information, please read York Region’s [norovirus](#) and [flu](#) fact sheets.

Should you have any questions, please contact York Region Public Health at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 73588.