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## KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

### NOROVIRUS OUTBREAK RESPONSE GUIDE

#### **PURPOSE**

This document provides guidance for responding to norovirus outbreaks in various settings within the community, including jails, schools, long-term care facilities (LTCF), assisted living facilities, and other healthcare or residential facilities, such as independent living facilities, residential care facilities for the developmentally disabled, acute care, transitional care, and rehabilitation units.

#### **AUTHORITIES**

902 KAR 2:020 Reportable Disease Surveillance - (Effective December 2022)

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/902/002/020.pdf>

Section 7. Notifiable Infectious Conditions and Notifiable Non-Infectious Conditions Requiring Priority Notification. Notification of the following diseases or conditions shall be considered priority and shall be made within one (1) business day:

- (10) Foodborne disease outbreak;
- (26) Norovirus outbreak;
- (43) Waterborne disease outbreak.

Section 12. Newly Recognized Infectious Agents, Healthcare-Acquired Infection (HAI) Outbreaks, Emerging Pathogens, and Pathogens of Public Health Importance. (1) The following shall be reported immediately by telephone to the Kentucky Department for Public Health:

- (a) A suspected incidence of bioterrorism caused by a biological agent;
  - (b) Submission of a specimen to the Kentucky Division of Laboratory Services for select agent identification or select agent confirmation testing; or
  - (c) An outbreak of a disease or condition that resulted in multiple hospitalizations or death.
- (2) An unexpected pattern of cases, suspected cases, or deaths that could indicate the following shall be reported immediately by telephone to the local health department in the county where the health professional is practicing or where the facility is located:
- (a) A newly recognized infectious agent;
  - (b) An outbreak;
  - (c) An emerging pathogen, which may pose a danger to the health of the public;
  - (d) An epidemic; or
  - (e) A non-infectious chemical, biological, or radiological agent.
- (3) A report of the following shall be considered priority and shall be reported to the local health department in the county where the health professional is practicing or where the facility is located within one (1) business day:
- (a) Suspected Staphylococcal or other foodborne intoxication; or
  - (b) Salmonellosis or other foodborne or waterborne infection.
- (4) The local health department shall:



- (a) Investigate the outbreak or occurrence;
  - (b) Carry out public health protection measures to address the disease or condition involved; and
  - (c) Make medical and environmental recommendations to prevent future similar outbreaks or occurrences.
- (5) The local health department may seek assistance from the Kentucky Department for Public Health.

For facilities under regulation of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), although not written into state nursing facility licensure and federal certification laws, OIG encourages adherence to these standards as part of each facility's infection control program, under 42 C.F.R. 483.80, and to promote a sanitary environment, under 42 C.F.R. 483.10(i)(2) and 483.90(i).

## **NOROVIRUS IDENTIFICATION**

**CLINICAL DESCRIPTION:** Noroviruses are a very contagious group of viruses, which can cause acute gastroenteritis, an inflammation of the stomach and small and large intestines.

**INCUBATION PERIOD:** Usually 12-48 hours from the time a person is exposed until symptoms develop; 95% of cases will develop symptoms by 3 days,  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3849296/>

**SYMPTOMS:** Acute onset, non-bloody diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, and abdominal cramps. Some persons might experience only vomiting or diarrhea. Low-grade fever and body aches also might be associated with infection.

**DURATION OF ILLNESS:** Symptoms typically resolve without treatment after 1-3 days in otherwise healthy persons. More prolonged courses of illness lasting 4-6 days can occur, however, particularly among young children, elderly persons, and hospitalized patients.

**SPREAD:** Norovirus is spread from person-to-person via the fecal-oral route or through contaminated food or water. The infectious dose for norovirus is very low (i.e., as few as 18 viral particles). The virus leaves the body through the stool of an infected person and usually enters another person when hands, foods, or objects contaminated with stool are placed in the mouth. Spread of norovirus can occur when people do not wash their hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. People can also get sick by eating food items contaminated during preparation or serving. Aerosolized spread from vomiting is possible. Person-to-person spread often occurs within families, schools, nursing homes, cruise ships, in childcare settings, and communities. Most norovirus outbreaks occur from November to April in the United States, but outbreaks may occur at any time of year.

**CONTAGIOUS PERIOD:** While symptomatic and up to 72 hours after vomiting and/or diarrhea has stopped. Viral excretion peaks 2-5 days after infection and may persist in the stool for as long as 4 weeks following infection, although it is unclear if detection of virus alone indicates a risk for transmission.

**TREATMENT:** There is no specific drug treatment for those with norovirus. Norovirus illness cannot be treated with antibiotics because it is caused by a virus. Supportive therapy may be necessary to prevent dehydration and to maintain fluid and electrolyte balance. Vomiting and diarrhea may lead to dehydration, which may become a medical emergency. Symptoms of dehydration include decrease in



urination, dry mouth and throat, and/or feeling dizzy when standing up. Ask a healthcare provider how to prevent dehydration.

**EXCLUSION:** Ill individuals should be excluded from work, childcare, and school until diarrhea and vomiting have stopped. More strict criteria apply to daycare workers, caregivers, food handlers, and LTCF staff who are ill with norovirus. These individuals should be excluded for 72 hours after recovery. Anyone with vomiting and/or diarrhea should NOT use pools, swimming beaches, recreational water parks, spas or hot tubs for at least 72 hours (3 days) after diarrhea and/or vomiting symptoms have stopped. Please call your local health department to see if further restrictions apply.

### **REPORTING TIMELINE:**

Outbreaks of acute gastrointestinal illnesses that could be caused by norovirus should be reported to the Local Health Department (LHD) within the jurisdiction in which the outbreak is occurring or to the Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH), Reportable Diseases Section (RDS) immediately upon recognition of the outbreak. (902 KAR 2:020 Reportable Disease Surveillance – Section 12). Two or more cases of acute gastrointestinal illness epidemiologically linked (e.g., by place and time) should trigger an Infection Preventionist to investigate whether an outbreak is occurring. Reporting of a confirmed norovirus outbreak shall be considered priority and shall be made within one (1) business day (902 KAR 2:020 Reportable Disease Surveillance – Section 7).

### **LHD QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE FOR POSSIBLE NOROVIRUS OUTBREAKS**

Notify the KDPH RDS of a potential outbreak.

- Add a new record in the “202X DEHP Outbreak Management” REDCap project for the correct year (e.g., 2024) and fill out the “KY - Initial Report Form / Outbreak Number Request” instrument with all available information. Include:
  - Name of and contact information for the facility/establishment/institution;
  - Number of ill individuals and total number of exposed individuals (aggregated by staff/residents/employees/customers/etc.);
  - A working case definition (see next section “Working case definition”);
  - Actions by the facility/establishment/institution to control the outbreak.
  - Initiate a line list and epi curve.

Working case definition.

- Include Person, Place, Time and Clinical/Laboratory characteristics.
- Initial case definition should be broad. As new information comes in, the case definition can become more specific.
- An example of a case definition for suspect norovirus infection would be: “Any Resident/staff member/customer (Person) at xxx LTCF/institution/establishment (Place) with at least two or more episodes of vomiting and/or diarrhea (Clinical criteria), within the past 24 hours with an onset date on or after Month/Day/Year (Time).”
- Case definitions may include methods to categorize cases as suspect, probable, or confirmed when these categories are necessary or useful. Case definitions for probable and confirmed cases should also include criteria for cases that were epi-linked to confirmed cases. Clinical criteria and laboratory



criteria are the basis for the establishment of case categories. For example: a confirmed case meets all the characteristics established in the case definition; a probable case usually has all the crucial characteristics but is missing a final component of confirmation, such as a final lab test, or an epidemiologic link to a confirmed case; a suspect case usually has some similar symptoms to known cases but may be missing a crucial symptom or may not link clearly to known cases and is not lab-confirmed.

Conduct a site visit with an environmentalist or obtain the layout and inspection report of the facility from the LHD environmentalist.

Encourage and review proper hand washing.

- Appropriate hand hygiene is likely the single most important method to prevent norovirus infection and control transmission. Reducing any norovirus present on hands is best accomplished by thorough hand washing with running water and plain or antiseptic soap. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers (>62% ethanol content) may be used to complement hand washing but should not be considered as a substitute soap and water hand washing.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Surfaces.

- Pay particular attention to areas likely to have greatest environmental contamination, such as bathrooms and high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, handrails, and water fountains).
- Clean, then disinfect contaminated surfaces with either of the following methods: Use a chlorine bleach solution with a concentration of 1,000 - 5,000 ppm (see Table 1 for dilution instructions based upon the concentration of bleach solution) for hard, nonporous surfaces. Prepare a fresh dilution of bleach every day and discard unused portions. If using a bleach solution for disinfection on nonporous surfaces, allow to air dry after application; OR, use disinfectants registered as effective against norovirus by the EPA (<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-g-antimicrobial-products-registered-epa-claims-against-norovirus-feline>).
- Leave bleach disinfectant on the affected area for at least five minutes, then clean the entire area again with soap and hot water.
- See Table 1 for Safety Precautions for Mixing Bleach Solutions.

Cleaning and Sanitizing Surfaces.

- Pay particular attention to eating utensils, food-use contact surfaces, mixed-use tables, highchair trays, feeding trays, plastic mouthed items (e.g., toys, pacifiers, etc.).
- Clean, then sanitize potentially contaminated items with a soap solution, rinse and dry with a paper towel, use a sanitizing bleach solution and allow to air dry before wiping with a towel. Use a chlorine bleach solution with a concentration of 200 ppm (see Table 1 for dilution instructions based upon the concentration of bleach solution).
- See Table 1 for Safety Precautions for Mixing Bleach Solutions.

Recommend exclusion of ill staff members in health-care facilities and food handlers during their acute illness and for 48 - 72 hours following symptom resolution.

Recommend use of contact precautions.

- Personal protective equipment (PPE): gown, gloves, and surgical mask for vomiting. Vomitus could aerosolize and infect others, who are in close proximity.



Avoid cross-coverage staffing.

- Avoid allowing staff to move between units or facilities with affected patients and units or facilities that are not affected whenever possible.

Cohort symptomatic patients when possible and provide separate toilet facilities for ill and well persons.

Monitor contacts of symptomatic individuals for symptom development.

- Includes family members, roommates, staff, etc.

Recommend the facility have signs on all entrances about the outbreak.

- The signs should alert visitors, supply staff, and vendors about the ongoing outbreak and encourage soap and water hand washing before and after visiting.

Cancel or postpone group activities, including dining.

- Residents should eat in their rooms.
- Ill residents should be restricted to their rooms during the acute phase of their illness and for a period of 24 - 72 hours following recovery.

Recommend that the facility close to new admissions for 2 norovirus incubation periods (i.e., 6 days), after the last onset of a case in a staff member or resident.

- Readmissions may be allowed to an unaffected unit.

When transferring symptomatic patients, notify the EMS and the hospital/receiving facility in advance about the ongoing outbreak, so appropriate precautions could be put in place to prevent the spread into the community or other facilities.

Collect stool specimens on 3 - 7 ill residents, patients, or staff and coordinate with LHD or RDS staff to send to the Division of Laboratory Services (DLS) for norovirus testing.

- Separate specimens for diagnostic testing for bacterial pathogens and for *C. difficile* should be collected for concurrent testing. The specimens for bacterial pathogens and *C. difficile* testing must be sent to a facility's usual lab or a national reference lab.
- Specimens collected for norovirus testing may be submitted to DLS; coordinate this process through the LHD or RDS. *NOTE: Norovirus specimens must be raw (not in media)* – Please see pages 18 - 19 for instructions on collecting and submitting stool specimens. KDPH recommends having at least 2 norovirus-positive specimens to confirm an outbreak. Please make sure to collect at least 3 specimens for testing. In the event that <5 but >2 specimens are collected and sent to the state lab; and, if 2 or more of those test positive for norovirus, KDPH does not recommend collecting any more specimens.

Complete the “KY - Final Report Form” instrument in the “20XX DEHP Outbreak Management” REDCap project.

- Must choose “Yes” that investigation is a “NORS-Reportable Outbreak” to activate the NORS report form instruments.

Complete the appropriate sections of the NORS form instrument in the “20XX DEHP Outbreak Management” REDCap project. RDS Epidemiologists will upload the data to NORS using NORSDirect.



- Required Variables
- General
- Laboratory/Environmental Investigation
- Etiology and Isolates
- Settings
- Outbreak Detection and Investigation Methods
- Interventions
- General Remarks
- Only complete these sections if applicable:
  - Animal Contact
  - Fungal Disease Outbreaks
  - Food
  - Traceback and Recall
  - Water

### **Criteria for Outbreak Determination if No Lab Specimens are Available:**

The classification and regression tree (CART) modeling-derived profile criteria, which are more sensitive for norovirus and more often available during outbreak investigations, may also be used. The CART-derived criteria are:

1. A greater proportion of cases with vomiting than with fever,
2. Bloody diarrhea in less than 10% of cases, and
3. Vomiting in greater than 25% of cases.

## **SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES: LIMITING THE TRANSMISSION OF NOROVIRUS IN HEALTHCARE FACILITIES, DAYCARES, AND THE COMMUNITY**

### **General Control Measures**

- Use contact precautions (PPE - gowns, gloves, and surgical mask for vomiting).
- Practice proper hand hygiene: Wash your hands with soap and water, especially after using the toilet, changing diapers, and before handling food.
- Wash fruits and vegetables, and cook meat products thoroughly.
- Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces and all high-touch areas.
- Wash laundry thoroughly.

### **Norovirus can be spread through fecal or vomitus contact**

- Remove bulk vomitus or stool and dispose of in the toilet.
- Clean the soiled area with detergent and water.
- For non-porous surfaces follow with a disinfectant or sanitizer effective against norovirus (Bleach solution or EPA approve product).
- Disinfectants and sanitizers should be used according to manufacturer's recommendation and according to label use.
- The CDC recommends that chlorine bleach disinfectant and sanitizer be used at the appropriate strength for the surfaces to be disinfected or sanitized. Up to 5000 ppm for non-porous surfaces to 200 ppm for mouthed items or food contact surfaces. See Table 1 for dilution instructions based upon ppm and surfaces. Allow the disinfectant and/or sanitizer to be in contact with the



area in accordance with labeling directions.

- Carpet or upholstered fabric visibly soiled with vomit or feces can be cleaned with hot water and detergent or steam cleaned. Do not dry vacuum.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces with the appropriate disinfectant or sanitizing solution. See Table 1 for bleach solution dilution instructions and safety precautions.

#### Limit the transfer of germs between sick and healthy individuals

- Dispose of vacuum cleaner bags between sick and non-sick living areas.
- Limit the flow of traffic in and out of ill resident's rooms.
- Segregate ill residents from well residents during routine activities when possible.
- Suspend group activities until the outbreak is over.
- Cohort ill individuals if possible. If not possible, monitor close contacts for symptoms.
- Do not prepare food or care for others when you are sick.
- Avoid cross-coverage of staff between units with illness and without.
- Facilities should have a "Worker's Health Policy" in place, and review it at least annually with employees.
- Notify the supervisor when an employee is ill.
- Exclude employees with vomiting, diarrhea, or nausea from work until 48 - 72 hours after symptoms resolve.
- Employees should use special care when other people in the home are sick, especially children or spouse.

### **HOUSEKEEPING: HANDLING LINENS TO PREVENT AND CONTROL INFECTION TRANSMISSION OF NOROVIRUS**

It is important to handle all potentially contaminated linen with appropriate measures to prevent cross-transmission.





## General Handling

- If the facility handles all used linen as potentially contaminated (i.e., using standard precautions), no additional separating or special labeling of the linen is recommended.
- No special precautions (i.e., double bagging) or categorizing is recommended for linen originating in isolation rooms.
- Double bagging linen is recommended *only* if the outside of the bag is visibly contaminated or is wet through to the outside of the bag.
  - Leak-resistant bags are recommended for linens contaminated with blood or body substances.
- If standard precautions for contaminated linens are not used, then some identification with labels, color coding or other alternatives means of communication is important.
- For the routine handling of contaminated laundry, minimum agitation is recommended, to avoid the contamination of air, surfaces, and persons.
- The risk of environmental contamination may be reduced by having personnel bag or contain contaminated linen at the point of use, and not sorting or pre-rinsing in resident care areas.
- It is important that laundry areas have hand washing facilities and products, as well as appropriate PPE available for workers to wear while sorting linens.

If laundry chutes are used, it is recommended that they are properly designed and maintained so as to minimize dispersion of aerosols from contaminated laundry (e.g., no loose items in the chute and bags are closed before tossing into the chute).

## Washing/Processing of Linens

- Detergent and water physically remove many microorganisms from the linen through dilution during the wash cycle. Facilities should follow manufacturer's instructions for clothing, linens, and other laundry items to determine the appropriate methods to produce a hygienically clean product. (*AAMI (Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation) defines the term "hygienically clean" as "free of pathogens in sufficient numbers to cause human illness."*) It is also important for facilities to consider a resident's individual needs (e.g., allergies) when selecting methods for processing laundry.
- Detergent:
  - Advances in technology allow modern-day detergents to be much more effective in removing soil and reducing the presence of microbes than those used in the past when much of the research on laundry processing was first conducted.
  - Facilities may use a detergent designated for laundry in laundry processing. Further, laundry detergents used within nursing facilities are not required to have stated anti-microbial claims. Facilities should closely follow manufacturer's instructions for laundry detergents used.
- Bleaching:
  - Laundry processing conducted within facilities typically occurs in a low water temperature environment. Many laundry items are composed of materials that cannot withstand a chlorine bleach rinse and remain intact.



- A chlorine bleach rinse is not required for all laundry items processed in low temperature washing environments due to the availability of modern laundry detergents that are able to produce hygienically clean laundry without the presence of chlorine bleach.
- However, a chlorine bleach rinse may still be used for laundry items composed of materials such as cottons.
- Water Temperature:
  - Hot water washing at temperatures  $>160^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $71^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) for 25 minutes and low temperature washing at  $71 - 77^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $22 - 25^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) with a 125 ppm chlorine bleach rinse remain effective ways to process laundry.
  - If a facility chooses to process laundry using a hot water temperature environment, the temperature should be  $\geq 160^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $71^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) for 25 minutes.
  - Facilities are not required to maintain a record of water temperatures during laundry processing cycles.
- Drying Temperature:
  - Laundry should be dried at a high temperature ( $>170^{\circ}\text{F}$ ).
- Alternate Methods for Laundry
  - Ozone Cleaning. The CMS, in collaboration with the CDC, has also determined that ozone cleaning systems are acceptable methods of processing laundry. Ozone cleaning systems also should be used per manufacturer's instructions.
- Professional Laundry Services
  - If linen is sent to a professional laundry, the facility should obtain an initial agreement between the laundry service and facility that stipulates the laundry will be hygienically clean and handled to prevent recontamination from dust and dirt during loading and transport. *For example, an ozone laundry cleaning system is a method that may require a professional laundry service. The facility will need to obtain such an agreement in this instance. Whether laundry processing is completed within the facility or outside the facility, facilities should have written policies & procedures that should include training for staff who will handle linens and laundry.*

### Machine Care and Maintenance

- Laundry equipment should be used and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions to prevent microbial contamination of the system. It is recommended that damp linen not be left in machines overnight.
- The CDC recommends leaving washing machines open to air when not in use to allow the machine to dry completely and to prevent growth of microorganisms in wet, potentially warm environments.
- Facilities are required to follow manufacturer's instructions for all materials involved in laundry processing (e.g., washing machines; dryers; any laundry detergents, rinse aids, or other additives employed during the laundry process).



## Bedding

- Standard mattresses and pillows can become contaminated with body substances during resident care if the integrity of the covers of these items is compromised.
- A mattress cover is generally a fitted, protective material, the purpose of which is to prevent the mattress from becoming contaminated with body fluids and substances.
- A linen sheet placed on the mattress is not considered a mattress cover.
- Patches for tears and holes in mattress covers do not provide an impermeable surface over the mattress. Therefore, it is recommended that mattress covers with tears or holes be replaced.
- It is recommended that moisture resistant mattress covers be cleansed and disinfected between residents with an EPA approved germicidal detergent to help prevent the spread of infections, and fabric mattress covers should be laundered between residents.
- Pillow covers and washable pillows should be laundered in a hot water laundry cycle between residents or when they become contaminated with body substances.
- Discarding mattresses if fluids have penetrated into the mattress fabric and washing pillows and pillow covers in a hot-water laundry cycle will also reduce the risk of indirect contact with infectious agents.

## **FOOD SERVICE STAFF**

Norovirus can be transmitted and spread through poor food handling practices and contamination of food and/or surfaces.

Hand washing The single most effective means of controlling the spread of viruses and bacteria in the food service environment is frequent, thorough and effective hand washing.

- Wash hands often with soap and warm water, and dry with a disposable or clean, dry towel.
- Wash hands after engaging in any activity that may contaminate them such as:
  - Wash hands after using the restroom.
  - Wash hands after handling soiled equipment or utensils.
  - Wash hands during preparation as often as necessary to prevent contamination and prevent cross-contamination.
  - Wash hands between raw and ready-to-eat foods.
  - Wash before putting on plastic gloves.
  - Wash hands after removing gloves.

## Manual sanitizing of food contact equipment



- Some sanitizers are not effective against norovirus. Check to be sure you are using a sanitizer that is effective against norovirus. <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-g-antimicrobial-products-registered-epa-claims-against-norovirus-feline>.
- Regular Unscented Liquid Bleach and many other sodium hypochlorite based compounds are effective against norovirus.
- Use all products in accordance with manufacturer’s labeling directions and at the recommended strength and concentration. Remember some products listed on EPA’s list may not be approved for use in a food service area and should be used only in approved areas.

#### Heat sanitization of equipment and utensils

- Heat sanitizing dishwashers that meet the regulatory requirement of 180°F are effective against noroviruses.
- Low temperature dish machines that use a sanitizing additive in the final rinse can be used as an alternative. The additive should be a sanitizing product that is effective against norovirus.
- Use the correct concentration of sanitizer specified for the chemical agent used.

#### Sanitizing of non-food contact surfaces

- Non-porous, frequently touched hard surfaces such as dining room chairs, tables, bus carts, etc. should be wiped clean with detergent and water and then sanitized with an approved sanitizing agent. See Table 1 for bleach solution dilution instructions.
- Use sanitizer at the highest concentration allowed for the intended surface and always in accordance with labeling directions. See Table 1 for bleach solution dilution instructions.
- Allow the sanitizer to stand on the surfaces in accordance with labeling directions (or allow to air dry) to completely kill the virus.
- Appropriate PPE should be worn when handling concentrated cleaners.
- Employees should follow all Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines for use as applicable to their facility.

#### Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly

- Raw fruits and vegetables have been a source of norovirus transmission.
- Prior to cutting, all raw fruits and vegetables should be thoroughly washed before preparation and service. NOTE: Check the label for commercially packaged fruits and vegetables. Those labeled “Ready-to-Eat” generally do not require further washing.
- Cutting boards and utensils used for the preparation of fruits and vegetables should be cleaned and sanitized before and after preparation.

#### Ice Machines

- Ice machines should be cleaned and sanitized at the onset of an outbreak and access to the machine should then be limited to designated food service staff only. Ice machines and other common food containers have been implicated in outbreaks.

#### Sick food workers

- Facility should have a “Workers Health Policy” in place and review it annually with staff



and new employees.

- Staff diagnosed with a confirmed case of norovirus or who have been exposed to a person living in the same household with a confirmed case of norovirus should be excluded from working in the food service area in accordance with the FDA Food Code 2013.
- Food workers who are sick with vomiting, diarrhea, yellowing of the skin, sore throat with fever, or with open lesions or cuts should notify their supervisor and should be restricted from work in food service areas in accordance with the FDA Food Code 2013.
- Return to the food service operation of a restricted or excluded employee shall follow the guidance established in the FDA Food Code 2013.
- Staff may contact the LHD for guidance on worker restriction and exclusion.

#### Limit access to unauthorized personnel

- Unauthorized personnel should not be allowed in the kitchen and food prep areas.
- Unauthorized personnel should not have access to ice machines.

### **MEDICAL STAFF, ADMINISTRATIVE AND OTHER NON-MEDICAL PERSONNEL**

Medical staff, administrative personnel, or other non-medical personnel in the facility can transfer viruses from one person to another if proper precautions are not taken.

#### Notify others immediately

- As soon as a resident or staff member becomes symptomatic, staff should actively begin infection control measures outlined in this guidance.
- Food service, housekeeping, other non-medical personnel, and visitors should be notified when there is a suspected case of norovirus or other communicable disease.
- Appropriate signage and/or notifications should be put into place.
- The LHD should be notified and consulted for control measures.

#### Hand washing is key to prevention

- Hand washing should always be performed before and after direct patient care.
- Personnel should always wash their hands when entering a resident's room and before handling any resident equipment.
- Staff should wash their hands after coming into contact with the resident's skin, bedding or any equipment inside an ill resident's room.

#### Avoid unintentional transfer of germs

- Staff members who are ill should not return to work until they have been without symptoms for 48 - 72 hours.
- Group activities at the facility should be limited, at the administrator's discretion, until the outbreak is declared over.
- Equipment or surfaces that may come into contact with multiple residents such as physical therapy equipment, stethoscope, medical carts, etc. should be cleaned and sanitized routinely to prevent the unintentional transfer of germs. See Table 1 for bleach solution dilution instructions.
- Clean and sanitize all high-touch areas. See Table 1 for bleach solution dilution



instructions.

- Medical and other support staff should use standard precautions, including appropriate PPE as indicated by the resident's condition and the agency's infection control plan.
- Administrators and medical staff should work together to cohort sick residents by confining them in one area of the building, attended by a single set of staff, if possible.
- If possible, avoid allowing staff to move between units or facilities with affected patients and units or facilities that are not affected whenever possible.

## **LABORATORY SPECIMENS FOR DIAGNOSTIC TESTING**

The early recognition of the causative agent of acute gastroenteritis may limit the impact among other residents and staff. **Submit laboratory specimens for diagnostic testing in a timely manner.** Laboratory confirmation plays a vital role in this determination. In outbreaks of unknown etiology, diagnostic specimens should be collected for bacterial pathogens, norovirus, and *C. difficile*. Norovirus specimen collection and submission guidelines are detailed below.

### Clinical Specimens:

*Raw stool (i.e., not in media)* is the preferred specimen for norovirus testing.

*Vomiting* is the predominant symptom among children, however, specimens of vomitus cannot be collected for testing at the Division of Laboratory Services (DLS). Vomitus may be accepted at other clinical or reference laboratories.

Note: Raw specimens for norovirus testing should be collected at the same time as collection of specimens for both bacterial cultures and if indicated, *C. difficile* tests. No more than 7 raw specimens for norovirus can be sent to DLS for storage and testing per outbreak. Please advise the LHD or RDS (502-564-3261) prior to sending specimens. Clinical specimen collection packaging and shipping guidance and appropriate lab submission form may be found on pages 18-19 of this document or at the DLS Website: <https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dls/Pages/default.aspx>

### **Timing:**

Specimen collection for viral testing should begin on day 1 of the epidemiological investigation. Any delays to await testing results for bacterial or parasitic agents could preclude establishing a viral diagnosis. Ideally, specimens should be obtained during the acute phase of illness (i.e., within 48 - 72 hours after onset) while the stools are still liquid or semisolid because that is when the level of viral excretion is greatest. In specific cases, specimens might be collected later during the illness (i.e., 7 - 10 days after onset), if the testing is necessary for either determining the etiology of the outbreak or for epidemiologic purposes (e.g., a specimen obtained from an ill food handler who might be the source of infection). If specimens are collected late in the illness, the utility of viral diagnosis and interpretation of the results should be discussed with laboratory personnel before tests are conducted.



**Number and Quantity:**

Specimen collection should occur as early as possible. Ideally, specimens from 3 - 7 ill persons should be obtained during the acute phase of the illness (preferably within 48 - 72 hours after onset). Bulk samples (i.e., 10 to 50 mL of stool placed in a stool cup or urine container) are preferred, as are acute diarrhea specimens that are loose enough to assume the shape of their containers. Serial specimens from persons with acute, frequent, high-volume diarrhea are useful as reference material for the development of assays. The smaller the specimen and the more formed the stool, the lower the diagnostic yield. Rectal swabs are of limited or no value because they contain an insufficient quantity of nucleic acid for amplification.

**Storage and Transport:**

Specimens should be kept refrigerated at 39°F (4°C). At this temperature, specimens can be stored without compromising diagnostic yield for 2 - 3 weeks, during which time testing for other pathogens can be completed. If the specimens have to be transported to a laboratory for testing, they should be bagged and sealed and kept on ice or frozen refrigerant packs in an insulated, waterproof container. Specimens must be shipped overnight. If facilities for testing specimens within 2 - 3 weeks are not available, specimens can be frozen at -4°F (-20°C) for antigen or PCR testing.

**Environmental Specimens:**

If a water or food is suspected to be the source of infection, samples should be obtained as early as possible with respect to the time of exposure and preferably stored frozen at -4°F (-20°C). DLS will coordinate with CDC for testing of these samples, if deemed necessary. Contact DLS for collection, packaging, and shipping instructions



<b>Table 1: Bleach Dilutions</b>						
<b>Bleach</b>	<b>Dilution</b>	<b>Water</b>	<b>Bleach</b>	<b>PPM</b>	<b>Application</b>	<b>Suggested Cleaning Method</b>
5.25%	1:10	1 gallon	1 2/3 cup	~5000	Porous surfaces such as wood floors or surfaces visibly soiled with vomitus or feces (surfaces not likely to have food or mouth contact)	Clean surface using soap and water, rinse with clean water and dry towel, then spray with bleach solution and allow to air dry.
5.25%	1:50	1 gallon	1/3 cup	~1000	Non-porous surfaces such as handrails, tile floors, counter-tops, sinks, toilets, doorknobs, and other commonly handled items that are visibly soiled with vomitus or feces (surfaces not likely to have food or mouth contact)	Clean surface using soap and water, rinse with clean water and dry towel, then spray with bleach solution and allow to air dry.
5.25%	1:250	1 gallon	1 Tbsp.	~200	Food/mouth contact items, stainless steel, and toys mouthed by children	Clean surface using soap and water, rinse with clean water and dry towel, then spray with bleach solution and allow to air dry.
6% to 6.25%	1:10	1 gallon	1 ½ cup	~5000	Porous surfaces such as wood floors or surfaces visibly soiled with vomitus or feces (surfaces not likely to have food or mouth contact)	Clean surface using soap and water, rinse with clean water and dry towel, then spray with bleach solution and allow to air dry.
6% to 6.25%	1:50	1 gallon	¼ cup	~800	Non-porous surfaces such as handrails, tile floors, counter-tops, sinks, toilets, doorknobs and other commonly handled items that are visibly soiled with vomitus or feces (surfaces not likely to have food or mouth contact)	Clean surface using soap and water, rinse with clean water and dry towel, then spray with bleach solution and allow to air dry.
6% to 6.25%	1:250	1 gallon	2 tsp.	~200	Food/mouth contact items, stainless steel, and toys mouthed by children	Clean surface using soap and water, rinse with clean water and dry towel, then spray with bleach solution and allow to air dry.



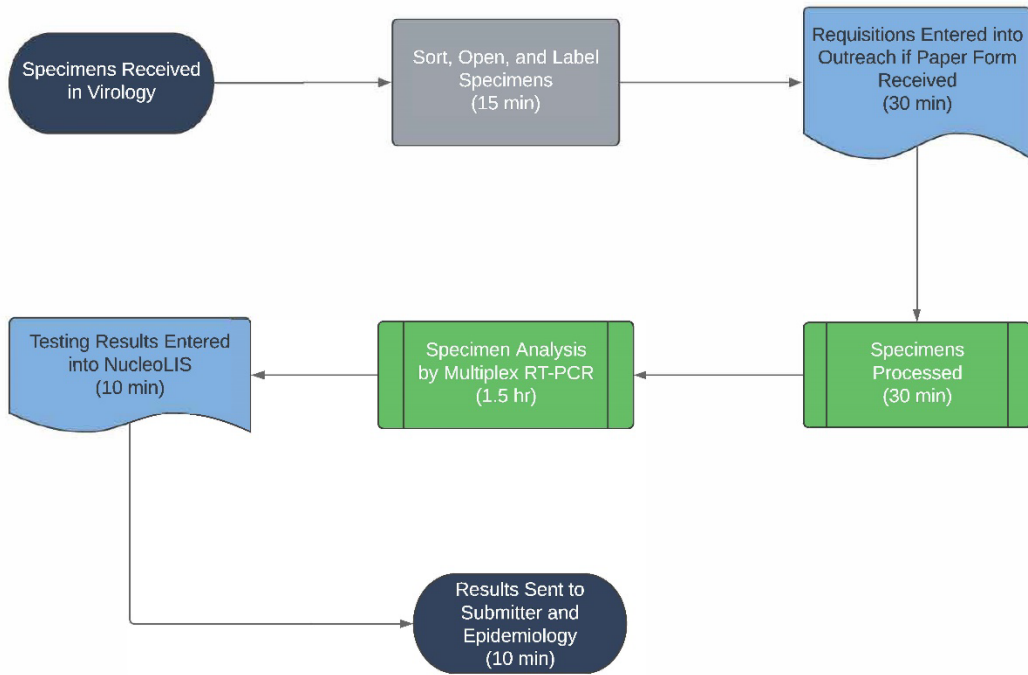


Bleach	Dilution	Water	Bleach	PPM	Application	Suggested Cleaning Method
8.25%	1:10	1 gallon	1 cup	~5000	Porous surfaces such as wood floors or surfaces visibly soiled with vomitus or feces (surfaces not likely to have food or mouth contact)	Clean surface using soap and water, rinse with clean water and dry towel, then spray with bleach solution and allow to air dry.
8.25%	1:50	1 gallon	2 ½ Tbsp.	~800	Non-porous surfaces such as handrails, tile floors, counter-tops, sinks, toilets, doorknobs, and other commonly handled items that are visibly soiled with vomitus or feces (surfaces not likely to have food or mouth contact)	Clean surface using soap and water, rinse with clean water and dry towel, then spray with bleach solution and allow to air dry.
8.25%	1:250	1 gallon	2 tsp.	200	Food/mouth contact items, stainless steel, and toys mouthed by children	Clean surface using soap and water, rinse with clean water and dry towel, then spray with bleach solution and allow to air dry.

All EPA-registered products have manufacturer instructions for diluting the product for sanitizing and disinfecting. To find the manufacturer’s instructions for the specific product you are using, you may follow the process outlined on this website: <https://nrckids.org/files/CFOC4%20pdf-%20FINAL.pdf>.

Safety Precautions for mixing: avoid mixing solution with other cleaning agents; use cleaning solution in well-ventilated areas; use personal protective equipment while disinfecting by wearing disposable gloves, masks, and eye protection noting that environmental cleaning with heavy bleach concentrations will require a heavier duty glove; and properly label all working bottles/containers of sanitizing solutions to identify the contents. (Note: It is a critical violation of the Kentucky Food Code to store chemicals improperly in unlabeled containers).

### DLS Norovirus Testing Timeline



Results are expected to be available same day as specimen receipt. Please allow additional time to totals above in case repeat testing is needed.



## Collection and Packaging of Enterics and Norovirus



**Kentucky Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Information on each test can be found in the Reference List of Tests  
<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dls/Pages/default.aspx>



Kit Components: Kit can be used to test one/both test codes. Please indicate on label which laboratory should receive sample.

- Multishipper with Cold Pack/Inmark Ambient
- 95kPa Bag with absorbent
- Two vial pack - Empty vial and Cary Blair Vial
- Zip Bag with absorbent
- Outreach Form
- Lab Form 275 - Norovirus
- Lab Form 219 - Enterics

### Collection of Specimen

1. Check expiration date of specimen vials.
2. Make sure two identifiers or lab label is on specimen vial.
3. Fill out lab or Outreach form completely.

Store specimen vials at room temperature.

\*Stool Specimens \*Remel package insert

1. Collect stool specimen into clean container.  
DO NOT mix urine or water with sample.
2. Open vials carefully.
  - Using the collection spoon attached to the cap, add enough specimen until the liquid reaches the arrow on the label.
  - Fill empty vial, to one-half full with stool specimen.

Fill only one vial at a time and replace the cap onto the same vial. DO NOT mix caps.

Important: Sample areas of the specimen which appear bloody, slimy, or watery. If the stool is hard, sample from each end and the middle of the specimen.

If larger specimen collection containers are used for Norovirus, contact KY DLS for additional instructions.

### Packaging and Shipping

Norovirus must be sent on cold pack.

1. Place sample vial/vials into zip bag with Zorb sheet.
2. Place sample into 95kPa bag.
3. Place sample bag on top of frozen cold pack and replace styrofoam lid.
4. Place Outreach/Lab Form on top of styrofoam lid.
5. Close box and place label on top of box.



Enterics only - Ambient Inmark box can be used.

1. Place sample vial into zippered bag with Zorb sheet.
2. Place zippered bag into 95kPa bag and seal.
3. Place air pillows inside box and place lab form on top.
4. Close box and place label on top of box.

Instructions for closure are on the flap of box.



Ship samples for overnight delivery to the KY Division of Laboratory Services


Refer to 49CFR 173.199 for current regulations on packaging and shipping of Category B infectious substances  
KY Division of Laboratory Services (502)564-4446

08/2022



"This form, when filled in, contains patient information that must be protected in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act."

Lab 275 (Rev 4/2021)

 <b>Kentucky Public Health</b> Prevent. Promote. Protect. <b>Viral Isolation and Immunology</b>	KY Division of Laboratory Services 100 Sower Blvd Suite 204 Frankfort KY 40601 (502) 564-4446 FAX (502) 564-7019	<b>Tests Requested</b>		<b>CLINICAL DATA</b>	
		COVID-19 <input type="checkbox"/>	Influenza <input type="checkbox"/>	Purpose of request: <input type="checkbox"/> diagnostic (give onset) <input type="checkbox"/> immune status <input type="checkbox"/> antibody status <input type="checkbox"/> Deceased Other _____	
<b>Patient Information:</b> (Use label or fill in completely)		Was patient prescreened for flu? Result of prescreening:		Other _____	
Name ( Last, First, MI )		Respiratory Panel <input type="checkbox"/>	Herpes/VZV <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Date of Onset:</b>	
Social Security # Sex EO Birthdate (yyyy-mm-dd)		Measles <input type="checkbox"/>	Mumps <input type="checkbox"/>	Symptoms: YES NO	
Home Address		Norovirus <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Fever <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Neurological <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Headache <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Respiratory <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Gastrointestinal <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Rash <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Lesions <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	
City		<b>Specimen Source / Date Collected</b>		Immunizations / Date	
State ZIP County		Throat Swab <input type="checkbox"/>	NP Swab <input type="checkbox"/>	None <input type="checkbox"/> MMR _____ Influenza _____ Varicella _____ COVID _____	
Send Reports to:		OP Swab <input type="checkbox"/>	Nasal Swab <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Contacts / Recent Travel</b>	
Submitter		Genital Swab <input type="checkbox"/>	CSF <input type="checkbox"/>	Tick bite _____ Mosquito bite _____ Community _____ Other _____ Travel _____	
Street Address / P O Box		Stool <input type="checkbox"/>	Serum <input type="checkbox"/>	Tick bite _____ Mosquito bite _____ Community _____ Other _____ Travel _____	
City		Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Tick bite _____ Mosquito bite _____ Community _____ Other _____ Travel _____	
State ZIP		Hospitalization Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Pregnant _____ weeks	Tick bite _____ Mosquito bite _____ Community _____ Other _____ Travel _____	
Phone Fax		Testing approved? COVID Sequencing Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Tick bite _____ Mosquito bite _____ Community _____ Other _____ Travel _____	
Physician (if other than Submitter)		Testing approved? COVID Sequencing Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Tick bite _____ Mosquito bite _____ Community _____ Other _____ Travel _____	
*****DLS Laboratory Findings*****					
		Date Received	Laboratory #	Tech	Date Reported

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