

Communities in Stevens county including Kettle Falls, Colville and Chewelah are continuing to experience a Norovirus outbreak. It is mostly concentrated in the Colville area with outlining cases in Kettle Falls and Chewelah.

Norovirus is a highly contagious virus that causes acute gastroenteritis (inflammation of the stomach and small intestines) which leads to abdominal pain, projectile vomiting, and diarrhea for 1-3 days. The virus is spread easily. It is found in the vomit and fecal material of infected people and is typically transmitted by:

- Having direct physical contact with people who are infected with the norovirus (for example caring for or shaking hands with an ill person then touching your hands to your mouth)
- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with norovirus
- Touching surfaces or objects with norovirus on them and then putting your hands in your mouth.

The virus can survive on surfaces for days or weeks and not all disinfectants will inactivate or kill it. It spreads rapidly in closed environments such as schools, dormitories and long-term care.

An individual with Norovirus is contagious from the moment they begin feeling sick and for 48 hours after their symptoms resolve. They should remain at home until it has been 48 hours from when their symptoms resolve. Food service employees who are experiencing symptoms do not return to work until 72 hours from when symptoms resolve.

To prevent the spread of norovirus:

- Practice proper hand hygiene
 - Wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds, especially after using the restroom or prior to eating
 - In between on unsoiled hands use hand sanitizer with at least 62% ethanol.
- Wash fruits and vegetables and cook seafood thoroughly.
- If preparing food in a group setting, wash hands and wear gloves. Do not touch ready to eat foods with bare hands or use common serving dishes i.e. plate of cookies
- When someone is sick do not have them prepare food for others, they are not to prepare food until 72 hours after symptoms resolve
- Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces properly
 - Use bleach mixture of ½ cup bleach with a gallon of water, allow 5 minutes to set before wiping clean
- Wash Laundry thoroughly
 - Immediately remove and wash soiled clothes or linens in a washing machine and machine dryer
 - When moving soiled linens or trash bags do not agitate or compress them
- If someone in the home, business or facility does become ill with suspected Norovirus isolate them or send home immediately.

For additional information please go to:

<http://www.netchd.org/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/downloads/keyfacts.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/downloads/foodhandlers.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/norovirus/229110-A-SampleNorovirusPoster508.pdf>

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-g-epas-registered-antimicrobial-products-effective-against-norovirus>