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Update

The number of norovirus cases in the communities of Kettle Falls, Colville and Chewelah has started to decrease but this virus continues to make some within our communities ill. The current updates on this illness includes:

- Fewer patients being seen at area hospitals, however infection control measures are still being instituted to ensure patients and caregivers are protected from potential exposure to the norovirus.
- Some area schools were still seeing students with symptoms consistent with norovirus and are taking precautions to prevent others from becoming ill. Schools began their winter break this week which will help limit exposure to the virus.
- Long term care facilities continue to have a limited number of positive cases. These facilities have instituted control measures that are still in place which has included visitor limitations and canceling group activities.
- Overall, within the Colville area there continues to be sporadic cases of lab confirmed norovirus.

What is Norovirus?

Norovirus is a highly contagious virus and can live on surfaces for days to weeks. It 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

How to Prevent and Control Norovirus Illness?

Even though there are fewer cases of the illness, everyone should continue with:

- 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

If a household member was impacted by norovirus, be sure to:

- Clean and disinfected 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

Because there are so many different types of norovirus, an individual can be infected several times during their lifetime. Immunity to specific types can develop but it is not known how long the immunity will last.

Thank you to your community partners and members who followed the recommendations to minimize the spread of norovirus in the community.

Northeast Tri County Health District offices:

Colville (509) 684-2262

Newport (509) 447-3131

Republic (509) 775-3111

For additional information:

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

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

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

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

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