

Primary Contact

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NOROVIRUS OUTBREAK AT LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

Benton-Franklin Health District (BFHD) is investigating several norovirus outbreaks at multiple long-term care facilities in the Tri-Cities. "Norovirus outbreaks can happen any time of the year but commonly peak in February and March. The national trend suggests we've already surpassed last year's peak, and infections in people over 65 are in excess of recent years," said BFHD Interim Health Officer Larry Jecha.

[Symptoms of Norovirus](#) infection may include vomiting and/or diarrhea, nausea, muscle aches, fever, and headache. If infected, symptoms typically start 12 to 48 hours after exposure and can last for one to three days. People who are ill should not return to work until 48 hours have passed since the last symptom ended in order not to spread it to others.

Healthcare providers should take extra precautions when these symptoms are present in clients/staff:

1. Use appropriate PPE such as gloves and KN95/N95 masks.
2. Wash hands with hot soapy water for at least 20 seconds (hand sanitizer does not work well against norovirus).
3. Handle soiled linens and clothes as little as possible and consider them contaminated.
4. Promptly machine-wash soiled linens and clothes with detergent in water for the maximum length cycle and dry them in the machine on the hottest possible setting.
5. Disinfect shoes and any other equipment that may have been exposed to any bodily fluids.

If you encounter patients with symptoms, testing is always encouraged. Should you suspect norovirus, education on how to reduce the transmission to others is very important.

Norovirus is not a reportable condition; however, Benton-Franklin Health District (BFHD) does follow-up on potential clusters and outbreaks, especially those involving vulnerable populations such as in long-term care or in restaurant workers where spread to the public could easily occur. Please call BFHD at 509-539-0416 or 509-460-4213 after hours.