

GASTROINTESTINAL ILLNESS OUTBREAK GUIDELINES

Gastrointestinal (GI) illness can be caused by bacteria such as *salmonella* or *campylobacter* which results from either contaminated food, water, recreational water, and is passed through the fecal oral route. GI illness can also be due to viruses such as norovirus, most often passed from person-to-person, exposure to fecal matter or vomit, or contaminated surfaces. ***A GI illness outbreak should be suspected when two or more people have vomiting and/or diarrhea onset within one to two days.***

Signs and Symptoms

In general, symptoms begin between 1 to 3 days following exposure and may last for 1 to 14 days, depending on which organism causes the illness.

- Watery diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Headache
- Fever
- Nausea
- Abdominal cramping

Exclusion for GI Illness

Remain at home until at least **48** hours after vomiting and/or diarrhea has stopped.*

If working in a **sensitive occupation (food handling, childcare, healthcare, etc.), should remain at home for at least **72** hours after diarrhea and/or vomiting has stopped.*

Control the Spread of GI Illness

Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds of vigorous rubbing, rinsing under a stream of clean water, and drying with disposable towels is required.

- Especially after using the toilet or changing diapers
- Always before eating, preparing, or handling food; and,
- Before giving yourself or someone else medication

Increase disinfecting frequency of high touch surfaces using a 1,000 ppm bleach solution (0.5 cups bleach per 1 gallon water); include bathrooms, toilets, faucets, door handles, tables, and light switches. Cleaning only removes the germs while disinfecting kills germs on surfaces or objects.

Vomit/Fecal Incidents

Use the following procedure to promptly clean and disinfect any public vomiting or fecal incidents:

Step 1: Isolate the areas where vomiting or diarrhea incident occurred (25 feet surrounding the incident).

Step2: Clean and protect yourself by putting on a face mask and use rubber, disposable gloves prior to using a disposable absorbent material, such as paper towels, to soak up visible vomit and/or stools. Wipe entire area with soap and water.

Step 3: Disinfect areas that have been contacted by body fluids using an EPA approved **effective virucide** or 10,000 ppm bleach cleaning solution. Leave disinfecting agent on surface for at least 5 minutes.

- Always clean and disinfect walls from floor up to 6ft.
- Professional carpet cleaning or steam cleaning is recommended to ensure cleaning temperatures reach 170° F minimum.

Chlorine Solution Directions

Mix 1.5 cups of household bleach per 1 gallon of water.

****AVOID DIRECT SKIN CONTACT****

Step 4: Clean entire area again with hot water and soap.

For questions regarding appropriate use of chlorine solutions or other effective disinfectants, please call Washoe County Environmental Health Services at (775) 328-2434.

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Norovirus*.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Salmonella*.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Campylobacter*.