

# County of Santa Clara Public Health Department

Health Officer  
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## HEALTH ADVISORY: Increased Norovirus and Other GI Illnesses in Santa Clara County

DATE: May 25, 2017  
TO: Primary care providers and urgent care settings  
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Since late April, schools in Santa Clara County have been reporting an increase in gastrointestinal illness, which are likely caused by noroviruses. Noroviruses commonly spread by touching surfaces contaminated with the virus, by close contact with someone who is infected, or by eating contaminated food or drinks. Symptoms may last for 1 to 3 days and include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and occasionally fever. Treatment is supportive with fluids.

Even after symptoms resolve, individuals are still highly infectious, especially for the first 48 hours, but sometimes for days afterwards. Hand sanitizers are not effective against noroviruses, so frequent hand washing with soap and water is critical to preventing spread. Noroviruses can also survive on hard surfaces for weeks, and many common cleaning products are not effective, so bleach solutions must be used.

To prevent the spread of norovirus, ensure: 1) ill individuals stay home while sick and for at least another 48 hours after symptoms resolve, 2) frequent hand washing especially after using the bathroom and before eating and 3) regular cleaning with bleach of contaminated and high touch surfaces.

### Clinicians are requested to:

1. **DIRECT** patients with norovirus/GI illness to remain home from work or school until at least 48 hours after symptoms have resolved, due to continued viral shedding and high infectivity of norovirus. They should continue frequent hand washing with soap and water for days after resolution of illness.
2. **EDUCATE** patients on how to prevent the spread of norovirus/GI illness, including proper hand hygiene (i.e. wash with soap and water, not hand sanitizers), food preparation, cleaning surfaces with bleach solutions, and laundering of contaminated linens or clothes. For more information and patient education, please visit [www.sccphd.org](http://www.sccphd.org).
3. **CONSIDER** performing norovirus PCR on patients suspected to be infected, and then request laboratories to forward positive norovirus specimens to the Santa Clara County Public Health Department Laboratory (408-885-4272) for genotyping.

Individual cases of norovirus are not reportable to the Santa Clara County Public Health Department, but if you have any questions or concerns about an outbreak, please call 408-885-4214.

Health ALERT: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health ADVISORY: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health UPDATE: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.