



MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON

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Norovirus suspected at Marshall High School

Multnomah County Health Department's Communicable Disease Office is investigating a cluster of suspected viral gastroenteritis among students at Marshall High School. Viral gastroenteritis is an infection of the stomach and small intestines, commonly caused by a group of viruses called Noroviruses. These illnesses were once called "the stomach flu", or "winter vomiting disease".

At this time, the Health Department estimates 50 to 100 students and staff have been affected by gastroenteritis symptoms this week.

The Health Department is conducting an investigation to try to determine the cause of the outbreak. This has included a sanitation inspection of facilities on the Marshall campus and interviews of a sample of sick students. School janitorial staff enhanced their cleaning and disinfection procedures.

Public health officials are recommending that students who are sick stay at home until they are well.

"Norovirus is a common virus and does not pose a serious threat to most people," states Gary Oxman, M.D., Multnomah County Health Officer. "It is of most concern to the elderly and people with serious existing health conditions.

People can avoid getting Norovirus infection by taking these steps:

- Wash your hands often, especially after using the toilet or changing diapers, and before eating or preparing food.
- Carefully wash fruits and vegetables, and cook oysters before eating them.
- Using gloves, thoroughly clean and disinfect surfaces immediately after contamination with feces or vomit by using a bleach-based household cleaner.
- Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens contaminated with feces or vomit (use hot water and soap).
- Flush any vomit or feces down the toilet and make sure that the surrounding area is clean.

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The symptoms of Norovirus infection usually include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramping. Most people get better within one or two days, and have no long-term health effects. However, sometimes people become dehydrated because they are unable to drink enough liquids to replace the liquids they lose due to vomiting and diarrhea.

Noroviruses can spread easily from person to person through contact with stool or vomit. People develop symptoms within two days after they contact the virus. Once ill, people are contagious and stay contagious for at least three days after they recover. Some people may be contagious for up to two weeks after they recover.

No medicine can cure Norovirus and there is no vaccine to prevent infection. Antibiotics do not work because they work to fight bacteria, not viruses. By drinking fluids such as juice or water, people can reduce their chance of becoming dehydrated.

For more information:

Multnomah County Health Department <http://www.co.multnomah.or.us/health/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_norwalk.htm

Multnomah County Communicable Disease Office: 503-988-3406

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