

# GI Illness Outbreaks (cont'd)

## FOOD SERVICE STAFF

Norovirus can be transmitted and spread through poor food handling practices and contamination of food and/or surfaces.

### HANDWASHING:

**The single most effective means of controlling the spread of virus and bacteria in the foodservice environment is frequent, thorough and effective hand washing**

- Wash hands often, with soap and warm water and dry with a disposable or clean, dry towel.
- Wash hands after engaging in any activity that may contaminate them.
- Wash hands after using the restroom.
- Wash hands after handling soiled equipment or utensils.
- Wash hands during preparation as often as necessary to prevent contamination and prevent cross contamination.
- Wash hands between raw and ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash before putting on plastic gloves.
- Wash hands after removing gloves.

### MANUAL SANITIZING OF FOOD CONTACT EQUIPMENT:

- Some sanitizers are **not** effective against norovirus. Check to be sure you are using a sanitizer that is effective against norovirus.
- EPA publishes a list of approved antimicrobial products effective against norovirus at: <http://www.epa.gov/oppad001/chemregindex.htm>
- Regular Unscented Liquid Bleach and many other sodium hypochlorite based compounds are effective against norovirus.
- **Use all products in accordance with manufacturer's labeling directions and at the recommended strength and concentration. Remember some products listed on EPA's list may not be approved for use in a food service area and should be used only in approved areas.**

## **HEAT SANITIZATION OF EQUIPMENT AND UTENSILS:**

- Heat sanitizing dishwashers that meet the regulatory requirement of 180 degrees Fahrenheit are effective against noroviruses.
- Low temperature dish machines that use a sanitizing additive in the final rinse can be used as an alternative. The additive should be a sanitizing product that is effective against norovirus.
- Use the correct concentration of sanitizer specified for the

chemical agent used

## **SANITIZING OF NON-FOOD CONTACT SURFACES:**

- Non-porous, hard surfaces such as dining room chairs, tables, bus carts, etc. should be wiped clean with detergent and water and then sanitized with an approved sanitizing agent.
- Use sanitizer at the highest concentration allowed for the intended surface and always in accordance with labeling directions.
- Allow the sanitizer to stand on the surfaces for several minutes to completely kill the virus.
- Personnel protective equipment (PPE), such as disposable gloves and face masks should be worn when handling concentrated cleaners. Employees should follow all OSHA guidelines for use as applicable to their facility.

## **WASH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES THOROUGHLY:**

Raw fruits and vegetables have been known to be a source of norovirus transmission. All fruits and vegetables should be thoroughly washed prior to preparation and service. Cutting boards and utensils used for the preparation of fruits and vegetables should be cleaned and sanitized before and after preparation.

## **SICK FOOD WORKERS:**

- Facility should have a "Workers Health Policy" in place and review it annually with staff and new employees.
- Staff who have been diagnosed as having a confirmed case of norovirus or who have been exposed to a person living in the same household with a confirmed case of norovirus should be excluded from working in the food service area in accordance with the 2005 FDA Model Food Code.

- Food workers who are sick with vomiting, diarrhea, yellowing of the skin, sore throat with fever, or with open lesions or cuts should notify their supervisor and should be restricted from work in food service areas in accordance with the 2005 FDA Model Food Code.
- Return to the food service operation of a restricted or excluded employee shall follow the guidance established in the 2005 FDA Model Food Code. Staff may contact the local health department for guidance on worker restriction and exclusion.

**LIMIT ACCESS TO UNAUTHORIZED PERSONNEL:**

- Unauthorized personnel should not be allowed in the kitchen and food prep areas.
- Ice machines should be cleaned and sanitized at the onset of an outbreak and access to the machine should then be limited to designated food service staff only. Ice machines and other common food containers have been implicated in some outbreaks.

**CONTACT DEB THOMAS AT THE  
ROWAN COUNTY HEALTH CENTER  
AT 606-784-8954 ext. 151**