

Nasty Norovirus spreading among kids (Broadcast)

INTRO:

DURING RESPIRATORY ILLNESS SEASON – THERE IS A MORE GRAPHIC... YET SHORTER-LASTING VIRUS MAKING THE ROUNDS ESPECIALLY AMONG KIDS: NOROVIRUS.

TAKE VO

THE VIRAL INFECTION IS NORMALLY REFERRED TO AS THE STOMACH FLU. BUT IT'S A DIFFERENT VIRUS THAN INFLUENZA. THE CONCERN IS THAT EVERYONE IS SUSCEPTIBLE TO IT. THERE'S NO VACCINE AND THERE'S NO BENEFIT TO GENERAL IMMUNITY... SAYS DR. DOUG KASPER – AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE SPECIALIST WITH OSF HEALTHCARE.

ALCOHOL HAND GELS DON'T KILL NOROVIRUS... DR. KASPER ADDS. EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF WASHING YOUR HANDS WITH SOAP AND WATER.

THE SYMPTOMS CAN BE GRUESOME... AND SPREAD QUICKLY FROM PERSON TO PERSON. ESPECIALLY WHEN FAMILY MEMBERS USE THE SAME BATHROOM IN THEIR HOUSEHOLD.

TAKE SOT | DR. DOUG KASPER | INFECTIOUS DISEASE SPECIALIST | OSF HEALTHCARE

"Symptoms usually come on very quickly. Roughly a day or two after exposure, the person will notice gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, abdominal pain, bloating pain, gas and diarrhea," Dr. Kasper says. "Most people that don't have an immuno-compromised history, the symptoms will pass in 2-3 days. It can be a much bigger problem in people who are chronically ill. It leads to dehydration and low food intake. So, if someone is more vulnerable or they have underlying GI issues like Chron's disease, ulcerative colitis, it can cause more profuse symptoms."

VO TAG

DR. KASPER SAYS YOU NEED TO NEUTRALIZE NOROVIRUS AT THE SOURCE... MEANING YOU HAVE TO CLEAN EVERY ITEM SOMEONE MAY HAVE TOUCHED WHO WAS INFECTED. THAT INCLUDES COUNTERS... BATHROOMS... FLOORS... YOUR KIDS' TOYS AND MORE. FOR CLEANING CONTAMINATED AREAS – USE BLEACH-BASED PRODUCTS FIRST. THE C-D-C SAYS TH LET THE CLEANER STAY ON THE AFFECTED AREA FOR FIVE MINUTES... THEN COME BACK AND CLEAN IT WITH HOT WATER AND SOAP.

ADDITIONAL SOUNDBITES/INFO

Where Norovirus is most common

"We see this a lot in school-aged children, daycares, nursing homes and assisted living facilities where many people are congregating," Dr. Kasper says. "The main issue with Norovirus becomes environmental cleaning and hand hygiene."

Dr. Kasper adds that spikes are typically seen when kids go back to school in the fall or early winter.

"Kids share meals at lunch, or they touch each other through play when they're sick," Dr. Kasper says. "With older adults, especially if they're living in their home, it's less likely because they're just not around that many people or touching things throughout the day."

How food preparation can increase Norovirus spread

"It's not the actual food; it's the person preparing the food. What we worry about with Norovirus is the hand hygiene of the worker. Whether it's at a cafeteria or a restaurant, or even at the home," Dr. Kasper says. "To get

infected with Norovirus, the person has to ingest it. It's not a skin infection, so most of the time we put our hands to our mouth, it's when we're eating. So, if somebody is preparing food, and the food becomes contaminated, you acquire it by touching or ingesting the contaminated food. But it's not coming from the food primarily, it's coming from the person who prepares the food."

Norovirus is highly transmissible

"You need a very small amount of virus, very few copies, for somebody to become infected," Dr. Kasper says. "With any virus, there's a certain amount the person has to acquire to trigger an infection. So, it's not one copy, but Norovirus is on the end of the spectrum where you need many fewer copies to generate infection."

Why Norovirus is dangerous for immunocompromised people

"The immune system is what clears Norovirus. So, somebody who has an intact immune system, although they'll get sick and it'll be very unpleasant, generally they will get better within a period of days," Dr. Kasper says. "Somebody who is immunocompromised, whether it's through having a transplant or medication steroids, they can really struggle to clear Norovirus for a longer period of time. What really builds up is the fluid loss leads to dehydration and possible electrolyte loss that leads to other complications. Then anorexia can occur when you're not hungry to eat. That can compound for somebody that is in a frailer state to begin with."

Most senior living communities have specific cleaning guidelines they're expected to follow by government agencies. Schools follow different guidelines, Dr. Kasper says, but a lot of the guidance is based on using industrial-based cleaners to try and stop the spread of illnesses.

Norovirus is reported in outbreaks, not a specific number of cases, because the virus spreads so fast and can affect a large amount of people in a smaller space. "When contact happens, infection is likely to occur," Dr. Kasper adds.

Norovirus is common and not unexpected, Dr. Kasper says. There are no new strains that come out like we see in the flu or COVID-19. The need for communication on the virus is simply to bring awareness to cleaning habits and to give advice on how to keep others safe.