



# Southwest District Health

13307 Miami Lane ♦ Caldwell, Idaho 83607 ♦ (208) 455-5300 ♦ FAX (208) 454-7722

*1008 E. Locust  
Emmett, ID 83617  
208/365-6371*

*1155 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. N.  
Payette, ID 83661  
208/642-9321*

*46 W. Court St.  
Weiser, ID 83672  
208/549-2370*

*132 E. Idaho Street  
Homedale ID 83628  
208/337-4931*

## HEALTH ALERT

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**May 8, 2015**

For more information, contact:  
(208) 455-5442

### **Vomiting and Diarrhea Illness Reported in Local Schools**

Southwest District Health (SWDH) has been notified of a large number of students with vomiting and diarrhea in Canyon County schools. Based on the symptoms and duration of illness, norovirus is the suspected cause. Due to the large number of ill individuals, SWDH is asking ill people to stay home until at least 24 hours after their symptoms have stopped.

Norovirus, sometimes referred to as the stomach flu, is a highly contagious, gastrointestinal illness that is easily spread through contact with others who are ill, contaminated food and water, or by touching contaminated surfaces. A very small amount of norovirus particles (fewer than 100) can make you sick. Symptoms usually begin 12 – 48 hours following exposure and include diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and stomach pain. People with norovirus illness shed billions of virus particles in their stool and vomit and can easily infect others. You can spread norovirus to others from the moment you begin feeling sick and for the first few days after you recover. Norovirus is able to survive on surfaces for long periods of time and can survive some disinfectants.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Stay home if you have nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, or a fever.
  - Children and staff should not attend school, day care, and other activities if ill.
  - Children and staff can return to school and other activities 24 hours after symptoms have stopped.
  - There is no specific medicine to treat people with norovirus illness. Norovirus infection cannot be treated with antibiotics because it is a viral (not bacterial) infection.
  - Encourage children to drink plenty of liquids to replace fluid lost from throwing up and diarrhea. This will help prevent dehydration.
  - If dehydration is suspected, see a doctor. Signs of dehydration can include: sunken eyes, decreased urination, dry mouth and throat, and feeling very tired or dizzy.
2. Protect yourself and others by:
  - **Practicing proper hand hygiene**  
Wash your hands carefully with soap and water, especially after using the toilet and changing diapers and always before eating or preparing food. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not effective against all illnesses and in this situation should not be a substitute for washing with soap and water.
  - **Taking care in the kitchen**  
Carefully rinse fruits and vegetables, and cook shellfish thoroughly before eating.
  - **Not preparing food while infected**  
People with norovirus illness should not prepare food for others while they have symptoms and for at least 3 days after they recover from their illness.
  - **Cleaning and disinfecting contaminated surfaces**  
After throwing up or having diarrhea, immediately clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces using a



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bleach-based household cleaner as directed on the product label. If no such cleaning product is available, you can use a solution made with 1 cup of household bleach to 1 gallon of water.

- **Washing laundry thoroughly**

Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with vomit or stool. Handle soiled items carefully—try not to shake them—to avoid spreading virus. If available, wear rubber or disposable gloves while handling soiled clothing or linens and wash your hands after handling. Wash soiled items with detergent at the maximum available cycle length and then machine dry.

### Resources:

SWDH is always interested in reports of gastrointestinal outbreaks in our community in order to offer guidance and assistance including:

- Testing to determine cause of the outbreak,
- Letters to inform parents,
- Control and prevention recommendations,
- Educational posters for encouraging good hygiene practices,
- Cleaning information, and
- Media assistance.

### What if I have additional questions?

- Call your doctor,
- Call Southwest District Health Communicable Disease Program at (208) 455-5442, or
- Visit the Center for Disease Control's Norovirus website at <http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/>

**Southwest District Health confidential reporting phone line: (208) 455-5442**

**Southwest District Health confidential reporting fax: (208) 455-5350**

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