



## Increasing Illness Seen Everywhere!

Calhoun County is experiencing a rise in suspected norovirus infection and the flu. Do you know the difference between the flu and norovirus? Do you know the best way to stay healthy? Learn the difference and how to protect yourself further!

***Washing your hands is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of illness.***

### What is Norovirus?

Norovirus causes inflammation of the stomach, intestines, or both. Norovirus is easily transmitted through food, by person-to-person contact, or by contaminated surfaces. The typical symptoms of norovirus include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramping. Other symptoms can include headache, fever, chills, muscle aches, and a low-grade fever. Symptoms of norovirus illness usually begin about 24 to 48 hours after ingestion of the virus, but they can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure. Illness usually lasts 1 to 3 days. Norovirus is known incorrectly as the "stomach flu". Norovirus is **NOT** related to the flu (influenza) which is a respiratory illness caused by a different virus.

### What are flu symptoms?

Sudden onset of illness, chills, headache, stuffy nose, feeling of weakness, fever higher than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, cough, sore throat, and muscle aches. In children, symptoms may include diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, and/or feeling really tired.

### What can I do to stay healthy?

***If you have the flu, stay home while you are sick. Staying home greatly reduces the spread of the flu.***

Influenza viruses are spread from person to person primarily through sneezing and coughing. The virus may also be spread through contact with germs on the hands of a sick person or by touching objects or surfaces that have been touched by a sick person.

Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected people. Contamination may occur either by consumption of contaminated food or water, direct person-to-person transmission, exposure to a contaminated environment, or contact with contaminated objects. A person is most contagious when they are sick with norovirus and during the first three days after they recover from the illness.

- Wash hands with soap and water. If soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based cleaner/hand sanitizer (like Purell® or a store-brand). Do this each time you have contact with a person with influenza or with objects in the area where the sick person is located. Washing your hands is the single most important way to stop the spread of influenza.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth without first washing your hands for 20 seconds (sing “Happy Birthday” twice). Wash hands before and after using the bathroom.
- Wash dirty dishes either in a dishwasher or by hand with warm water and soap. It is not necessary to separate eating utensils used by a person with influenza.
- It is not necessary to separate soiled linen and laundry used by a person with influenza from other household laundry. Laundry can be washed in a standard washing machine with warm or cold water and detergent. Do not hold or carry the dirty laundry close to your body or face, in order to avoid contamination. Wash hands with soap and water after handling soiled laundry.
- Throw tissues used by the ill person in a bag and throw it away with other household trash. Consider placing a bag at the bedside of the ill person for this purpose. There is no requirement for special handling of this trash.
- You can clean counters, surfaces, and other areas in the home regularly using normal cleaning products. No special product is necessary.

There is still time to get your flu vaccine! Further information about flu or norovirus, visit

[https://www.calhouncountymi.gov/government/health\\_department/fact\\_sheets/](https://www.calhouncountymi.gov/government/health_department/fact_sheets/), or call us at 269-969-6363.