Norovirus

What is Norovirus?
- Norovirus is a very contagious source of non-bacterial diarrhea and vomiting.
- The illness can occur at any time of the year but is most common in the fall and winter months.
- Norovirus outbreaks commonly occur in areas where people are in close proximity to one another such as nursing homes, childcare centres, banquets, cruise ships, schools, and restaurants.

Signs and Symptoms
- Sudden onset include watery diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, headache, or low grade fever.
- Can last for 24 to 48 hours. The virus can be spread up to 48 hours after the symptoms stop and in some people up to two weeks.

How is Norovirus spread?
- Norovirus is found in the feces or vomit of infected people.
- Others can become infected with the virus by direct contact with the person who is ill and by touching contaminated surfaces or objects e.g. door handles, shopping carts.
- Contaminated water, raw shellfish and other foods have also been identified in outbreaks.

How to decrease the spread?
- Thorough hand washing is the best prevention. Make sure that the hands are thoroughly washed after using the toilet, changing diapers, and before preparing food.
- Immunity following the infection is usually short term lasting up to 14 weeks.
- Any clothing or linens that have been contaminated should be carefully removed as soon as possible, and washed in a hot water cycle at the maximum length of time.
- Persons ill with norovirus should avoid being around others.
- If you think you are infected with norovirus, do not prepare food for other people.

Recommended absence:
- Stay home if you are ill.
- If you are an employee of an institution, day care or daycare attendee, or you are a food handler, further restrictions may include staying home until you are symptom free for a 48 hour period.

Norovirus is not be reported to the Medical Officer of Health as required by the Health Promotion and Protection Act.

Reference

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