



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Meeker McLeod Sibley**  
Community Health Services

## ***Meeker-McLeod-Sibley Community Health Services***

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

TO: All newspapers and radio stations in Meeker, McLeod and Sibley Counties

FROM: Allie Freidrichs, CHS Director

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### **Meeker McLeod Sibley Community Health Services urges steps to prevent Norovirus and other GI illnesses**

The end of the year holidays are perfect for family gatherings, shopping excursions and workplace potlucks. These, in turn, can lead to an uninvited guest: Norovirus, which causes people to become sick with cramping, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Norovirus is a highly contagious virus.

“People with norovirus illness are contagious from the moment they begin feeling sick and for the first few days after they recover,” says Allie Freidrichs, a Director for Meeker McLeod Sibley Community Health Services (MMS CHS). “There is no vaccine to prevent norovirus and there is no medication to treat norovirus. Prevention is up to each of us.”

Anyone can get infected with norovirus and get sick. Also, you can get norovirus illness many times in your life. Noroviruses are a group of related viruses that can cause gastroenteritis, which is an inflammation of the stomach and intestines. Each year norovirus causes approximately 20 million illnesses, resulting in tens of thousands of hospitalizations and hundreds of deaths. If you have norovirus illness, you can feel extremely ill and throw up or have diarrhea many times a day. This can lead to dehydration, especially in young children, older adults, and people with other illnesses. Norovirus is the leading cause of foodborne illness outbreaks in Minnesota.

The Community Health Services offers these tips to prevent from becoming sick:

- Stay home if you are sick. This means staying home from school and work. Food service workers are required by law to stay home if they are sick.
- Practice proper hand hygiene. Wash your hands carefully with soap and water, especially after using the restroom and changing diapers and before preparing foods or eating. Wash your hands more often when someone in your household is sick.
- Be smart in the kitchen. Do not prepare food if you are sick with Norovirus or Norovirus symptoms and for at least three days after you recover. Carefully rinse fruits and vegetables and thoroughly cook oysters and other shellfish before serving.
- Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces. Use a household bleach solution (up to 1½ cups of bleach in one gallon of water) to clean surfaces after vomiting or diarrhea accidents.
- Avoid pot luck gatherings. As difficult as this may be, it’s good advice to stay away from homemade items just to reduce exposure to potentially contaminated food.

For more information about norovirus and how to prevent and treat the illness, visit [www.cdc.gov/features/norovirus](http://www.cdc.gov/features/norovirus).