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Health Department Reminds Residents to Take Precautions to Avoid Norovirus

The Toledo-Lucas County Health Department is reminding the community that norovirus is common this time of year. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, headache, body aches, and sometimes a mild fever. People typically become ill 24 to 48 hours after exposure to the virus, and symptoms usually last one to two days. It is important to note that people can spread the virus for up to 2 weeks after their symptoms go away.

Transmission

Norovirus is present in the stool (feces) and vomit of infected people. It is spread primarily through contact with infected individuals, or through contamination of food prepared by a person who is currently ill or has been recently ill and didn't wash their hands appropriately.

Prevention

Although people commonly refer to norovirus illness as "stomach flu," the illness is not the same as influenza. Influenza is primarily a respiratory illness, with symptoms like high fever, body aches, sneezing, a runny nose or a sore throat. Moreover, while influenza can be prevented with a vaccine, there is no vaccine for norovirus. To help prevent the spread of noroviruses:

- Wash your hands after going to the bathroom
- Wash your hands before handling food, beverages and ice
- Wash your hands before eating
- Excuse yourself from food preparation duties if you have diarrhea and/or vomiting
- Discard foods that were handled or prepared by someone with diarrhea and/or vomiting
- Promptly clean and disinfect any surfaces that become soiled with vomit or stool
- Stay home if you are ill
- Keep sick infants and children out of areas where food is being handled and prepared
- Do not prepare food for others or provide healthcare while you are sick and for at least 2 days after symptoms stop.
- No one in a high risk position should work until 48 hours after symptoms subside (this includes food handlers)
- Avoid swimming in a public pool for 2 weeks following any diarrheal illness

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