

Health Alert

Likely Norovirus Outbreak

July, 15, 2014

Dear Colleagues:

Since Thursday (7/10/2014), the Kitsap Public Health District has received more than 200 reports of children and adults who have visited Horseshoe Lake County Park in South Kitsap and have at least one of the following symptoms: **nausea, vomiting, fever, stomach cramps, and diarrhea.**

The symptoms occur anywhere from 12-48 hours after exposure. The differential diagnosis for such a quick incubation period is limited to a few organisms of which noroviruses are the most likely. This is not yet confirmed, but we have closed Horseshoe Lake to prevent any further illness.

Noroviruses were previously called Norwalk-like viruses. They are a group of non-enveloped, single-stranded RNA viruses that cause acute gastroenteritis. Noroviruses are named after the original Norwalk strain, which caused an outbreak of gastroenteritis in a school in Norwalk, Ohio in 1968.

The best way to detect norovirus is in stool specimens collected when a person has acute illness (within 48 to 72 hours after they get symptoms). Norovirus can sometimes be found in stool specimens collected 2 weeks after a person recovers. Real-time reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction (RT-qPCR) is the most widely used diagnostic assay for detecting norovirus. This assay detects the genetic material (RNA) of the virus. It can be used to test stool, vomitus, and environmental specimens.

The Kitsap Public Health District is running stool studies including bacterial culture and viral testing for norovirus on a select number of patients to help inform community providers. Pending the results of the first few samples we may expand our testing to include parasites or toxins. We are not recommending providers test all patients who are ill at this time. When we have confirmation of the agent either from the swimming beach or from a patient we will create a case definition to help you identify if an illness is consistent with a confirmed case.

There is no specific therapy to treat people with gastroenteritis caused by norovirus infection. Dehydration is the most common complication that may require medical care.

- Treatment includes replacing fluids lost from vomiting and diarrhea and correcting electrolyte disturbances. Encourage oral fluids and giving fluids intravenously are used for severe dehydration.
- Avoid giving antimotility agents to children younger than 3 years old. However, these agents may be helpful in older children and adults, particularly when used along with rehydration treatment.
- Antiemetic agents generally should be given to adults only.
- Antibiotics are of no benefit in treating norovirus infections.

Please call 360-337-5235 if you have additional questions. This message will be posted on our website www.kitsappublichealth.org.

Sincerely,

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