

Written Procedures for Clean-Up of Vomit and Diarrhea

[Chapter 246-215-02500 Washington Administrative Code](#)

Food establishments are required to have written procedures for employees to follow when responding to events involving the discharge of vomit or fecal matter onto surfaces in the food establishment. The goal is to respond properly and quickly to minimize the spread of pathogens to employees, customers, and food in the establishment. Written procedures should focus on identifying and adequately training personnel, isolating the contaminated area, and the clean-up process specific to the types of surfaces in the establishment. The following questions will guide you towards crafting procedures for your establishment.

Many pathogens are contained in vomit and fecal matter. Norovirus, according to the Centers of Disease Control, is the most prominent foodborne illness in the United States and is transmitted via the fecal-oral route. Employees, customers, and food are all at risk of direct exposure from a vomit or diarrhea event in a food establishment. Norovirus illness is usually brief, with acute symptoms of gastroenteritis, inflammation, vomiting, and diarrhea. Young children, the elderly, and people with other immunocompromising medical conditions are most at risk for more severe or prolonged infection.

1. Who should clean up an incident?

- Employees who are not directly involved in food preparation and service activities should be trained and responsible for following clean-up procedures.
- Food establishments with less employees should follow their employee illness policy with regards to specific restrictions or exclusions to food preparation and service activities.
- Employees should thoroughly wash their hands and arms before returning to work.
- Employees should change their clothes before returning to work.

2. What cleaning supplies should I use?

- Use approved disinfectants that are effective against Norovirus.
- Use disposable personal protection equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks, gowns, shoe covers, etc.

3. What will be done with open or exposed food?

- Food and single-service items in the contaminated area must be discarded immediately.

4. What training procedures are in place for employee hygiene, cleaning, use, and disposal of personal protection equipment?

- Employees must be trained on the proper methods of using and disposing PPE and cleaning materials that have been contaminated, proper usage of disinfectants, the overall cleaning process, and monitoring for illness in case they become infected during the cleaning process.
- Training logs are recommended, but not required, to be a part of the establishment's Employee Illness Policy.

5. When will the clean-up plan be implemented?

- Define employee responsibilities before, during, and after the clean-up occurs.



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6. How will contaminated surfaces be cleaned and disinfected?

- Remove the vomit or diarrhea with paper towels or absorbent powder. Carefully remove the soaked towels or powder and place in a sealable plastic bag.
- Wash all surfaces with soapy water and rinse with clean water.
- Hard surfaces should be disinfected with an approved disinfectant and a mop.
- Carpeted or upholstered surfaces will need additional steam cleaning.

7. How will the affected area be blocked off and contained to minimize exposure to employees and other customers?

- Use signs and other barriers to block off the contaminated area. A 25-foot radius of the contaminated area is recommended.
- For smaller establishments, you may need to remove customers from the establishment until the clean-up is complete.

What should be included in my clean-up kit?

- Personal protection equipment (disposable gloves, masks, gowns, shoe covers, eye protection, etc.)
- Plastic garbage or biohazard bags
- Paper towels
- Absorbent powder (kitty litter, baking soda)
- Approved disinfectant for use against Norovirus
- Caution tape for blocking areas
- Mop and bucket
- Note that some vendors may be able to provide clean-up kits.

What kind of disinfectant should I use?

When an establishment is not able to use chlorine disinfectant due to availability or surface type, other viable alternatives should be used. The United States Environmental Protection Agency and Occupational Safety and Health Administration have a list of approved disinfectants that are approved to use against Norovirus. Click here to view the list and use the product label system to read the chemical uses and label at <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-g-epas-registered-antimicrobial-products-effective-against-norovirus>. Remember read the label and only use the disinfectant as the label dictates.

If using chlorine bleach, a solution of 1/3 to 1 ½ cups of bleach mixed with one gallon of water should be used. Ventilate the area well and use PPE when handling the bleach solution.

Make sure that disinfectants selected from this list are approved for use in a food establishment. Note that Quaternary ammonium, a common disinfectant in food establishments, is not effective against Norovirus. For food establishments that use a vendor and are concerned they do not have a proper disinfectant for their clean-up plan, consult with your vendor on what is right for you before you have to respond to an incident.