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Media Release

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Horseshoe Lake Illness Confirmed as Norovirus

Bremerton, WA—The Kitsap Public Health District has confirmed the virus affecting those who visited Horseshoe Lake County Park was norovirus. All human stool samples tested were positive for the same type of norovirus, a highly contagious virus that causes symptoms of stomach pain, nausea, diarrhea and vomiting.

The park remains closed while KPHD awaits lake water test results from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC's test will determine if the virus is still present in the park's swimming area. **The decision to reopen the park will not be made until results are available from CDC which won't be until Friday, July 18.**

More than 260 people have reported symptoms after visiting the lake between Thursday, July 10 and Sunday, July 13. Kitsap County Parks & Recreation estimates that up to 2,500 people visit the park during hot summer weather.

About norovirus:

Norovirus is the most common cause of acute gastroenteritis in the United States. Each year, it causes 19-21 million illnesses and contributes to 56,000-71,000 hospitalizations and 570-800 deaths. Norovirus is also the most common cause of foodborne-disease outbreaks in the United States.

Norovirus is a very contagious virus. People can get norovirus from an infected person, contaminated food or water, or by touching contaminated surfaces. The virus causes the stomach or intestines or both to get inflamed (acute gastroenteritis). This leads to stomach pain, nausea, and diarrhea and vomiting. Anyone can be infected with norovirus and get sick, and people can have the illness many times in their lives. There is no vaccine to prevent norovirus infection, but there are steps people can take to avoid spreading or contracting norovirus.

In most instances symptoms will improve one to two days after onset. If symptoms appear severe or do not improve within 24 hours, people should visit their primary care provider as soon as possible.

Preventing norovirus:

- **Practice proper hand hygiene:** Wash hands carefully with soap and water especially after using the toilet or changing diapers, and before eating, preparing and handling food.
- **Wash fruits and vegetables**
- **Cook seafood thoroughly:** Noroviruses can survive temperatures as high as 140F and quick steaming processes that are often used for cooking shellfish.
- **Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces:** After throwing up or having diarrhea, immediately clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces.
- **Wash laundry thoroughly:** Immediately remove and wash clothes or linens that may be contaminated with vomit or stool (feces). Wash with detergent at the maximum available cycle length and machine dry them.

Avoiding waterborne illnesses:

- Don't drink lake water.
- Don't go in the water if you are sick, and don't visit a public recreation area within 48 hours of being sick.
- Keep children who wear diapers or aren't toilet trained out of the water.
- Prevent swimmer's itch by showering or towel drying right after you leave the water. Using sunscreen may also help prevent swimmer's itch.
- Avoid all contact with water that has a blue or green colored scum layer—it can make you very ill.

Report the following to the Health District so action can be taken:

- Diarrhea, vomiting or skin rashes after contact with lake water;
- Swimmers itch;
- Blue or green algae scum layer on the water;
- Water that smells bad.

Reports can be made online at <http://kitsappublichealth.org/about/health-concern.php> or weekdays from 8am – 4:30 pm by calling 360-337-5235. After hours people should call 9-1-1.

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