

**Sample Parent Letter
During a School Norovirus Outbreak**

[Type Date]

Dear Parent/Guardian:

[Type LPHA name] and the Iowa Department of Public Health have been investigating reports of students and staff experiencing symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea at [Type school name]. These symptoms appear to be the result of an outbreak of norovirus.

Norovirus is a common cause of gastroenteritis in people. Symptoms usually include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramping. The symptoms of norovirus appear about 24 - 48 hours after swallowing the virus, with a range of 12-48 hours. The illness is usually brief, lasting only one to three days. This virus is most commonly spread by eating contaminated foods or liquids, touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then placing hands in mouth, or having direct contact with a person who is infected and showing symptoms. In order to prevent the spread of this virus in your home (and at school), follow these basic prevention strategies:

- Wash hands after using the toilet.
- Wash hands before handling food or ice.
- Wash hands before eating.
- Refrain from food handling duties if currently ill and for 2 days after diarrhea and vomiting have stopped.
- Discard foods that have been handled or prepared by someone who is, or has recently had, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Promptly clean and disinfect any surfaces that become soiled with vomit or diarrhea.
- Ill staff and children should remain at home until 24 hours after diarrhea and/or vomiting cease. Education on proper hand hygiene should be emphasized upon return to school.
- School staff who handle food and have had diarrhea and/or vomiting should be excluded until 48 hours after the last bout of vomiting and/or diarrhea.

Handwashing with soap and water is the most effective way to remove norovirus from the hands and should be used when caring for a person with suspected or known norovirus.

Although 62-90 percent alcohol hand sanitizers are effective for hand hygiene against other viruses and bacteria, they have not been shown to be effective in killing norovirus. They should not be used as a substitute for soap and water to remove norovirus from hands.

Measures are also being taken at the school to prevent further spread of the illness. For additional information about norovirus visit:

www.idph.state.ia.us/Cade/DiseaseIndex.aspx?disease=Norovirus

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact or call [Type LPHA or IDPH name] at [Type agency phone number].

Sincerely,

[Type LPHA or IDPH name]
[Type job title]