

**CARTERET COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**
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Food Safety News



NORO WHO?

There has been a rise in the number of Norovirus, Noro, cases reported in Carteret County recently. Norovirus presents a HIGH risk for food contamination and customer illness. The CDC estimates that noro is the leading cause of foodborne illness in the United States. Transmission is commonly through the fecal-oral route and contaminated food. Practicing proper handwashing, often will reduce the risk to both staff and customers. Handwashing will not remove all pathogens present, therefore;

- Prohibit bare hand contact
- Decontaminate any areas contaminated
 - with norovirus.
- Maintain clean restroom areas to prevent
 - the potential for cross contamination.
- Ensure thorough cleaning and sanitizing of
 - plates, tableware, utensils, etc.
- Repeatedly disinfect heavy hand-contact areas/surfaces



- Use handwashing in conjunction with gloves
- Monitor the customer self-service areas (e.g. buffet bar) to prevent contamination.
- Consider wrapping ready-to-eat items individually to reduce the chance of transmission.
- Change serving utensils often

Norovirus is DIFFICULT to eliminate from the premises. Sick employees can contaminate surfaces such as handles, walls, doorknobs, tables and chairs, toilet areas, even curtains. Rule .2616(d) of the NC Food Safety Rules states; "**No employee who has a communicable...disease that can be transmitted by foods, or who is a carrier...shall work in a food service establishment in any capacity in which there is a likelihood of...contaminating food.**" Consider implementing an employee health policy that includes these main components;

Report

Require all employees to immediately report to management the following symptoms; vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat with fever, diagnosis of norovirus & exposure to noro within the past 48 hours.

Exclusion

Employees exposed to noro should also be excluded from working with food. If your establishment serves a highly susceptible population, (young, elderly, pregnant or weakened immune) then exclude employees with Norovirus diagnosis, even if they are symptom free. Reinstate an employee when; written medical documentation from a health practitioner is provided that states that the employee is free of noro, or the employee has been free of symptoms for more than 48 hrs.

Restriction

Restrict employees with symptoms like sore throat and fever, or when diagnosed with norovirus but no longer having symptoms, (without the help of medication) from working with food.



AND THE SURVEY SAYS....

In an effort to do a better job for you, some of you received a survey and a pre-paid envelope with this mailing. Please take the time to fill it out and return it to us. This is your chance to be heard. If you didn't get one this year, this is just a random sampling, your turn will come. Thank you for your feedback, we look forward to hearing from you.

CONTACT US



Remember, you can contact us any time. There is no need to wait until your next inspection to ask that question. Call the Environmental Health Division at **728-8499** or email your inspector at their address, listed on the front page. Asking now could save you points later.



SERVSAFE

Carteret County Environmental Health Staff offered a

ServSafe course in February. ServSafe is a national food safety course that teaches food service workers about safe food handling practices. Hats off to all those in attendance. We encourage all restaurant managers to take a ServSafe course with 12 or more classroom hours. A maximum of two points can be added to a food service establishment's final grade if a full-time responsible person successfully completes an approved food safety course.

LET'S HEAR IT FOR HANDWASHING

You've all heard the easiest way to prevent the spread of disease is through frequent, and most importantly, proper hand washing. Knowing how and when to wash your hands is a good habit you will carry with you for the rest of your life.

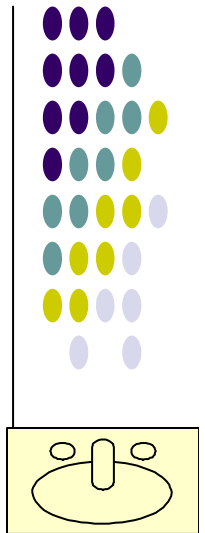
The entire hand washing process should take about 20 seconds. Not long, considering the days it could take for you to overcome an illness.

Always wet your hands before adding soap (you do not wash anything else before adding water, right?) Scrub for at least 15 seconds, paying special attention to your nails and knuckles. Rinse thoroughly and use single-use paper towels to dry your hands, turn the faucet off and open the restroom door. The air-blower will dry your hands just fine if it's the only drying device available.

Any kind of soap will work, as long as you scrub well. Sing yourself (or your coworkers) a song while you scrub. Nursery rhymes work well as they are about 15 to 20 seconds in length.

Use hand sanitizers in place of proper hand washing is not recommended. Hand sanitizers are not effective without washing between uses, because they do not take the dirt (and dead germ bodies) away. There are also some viruses (like norovirus) not affected by the sanitizers that are readily available to the public. You need soap and water to truly get rid of the germs. Wash them down the drain!

If you would like for us to provide your staff with a hand washing demonstration, or any other food safety related training, please call your health inspector at 728-8499. We would much rather train your staff now than have you loose points on the inspection sheet or worse yet, respond to an outbreak that could have been avoided with 20 seconds at the hand sink!



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