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NOROVIRUS ON THE RISE IN INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

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Indian River County, Fla. – Norovirus is a very contagious virus. It is commonly known as the "stomach flu" but is unrelated to true influenza, which causes respiratory illness. The symptoms of norovirus are vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, and stomach pain. Symptoms develop within 12 to 48 hours after exposure to norovirus. Most people are better within one to three days. The virus is spread while you are sick and for several days after they recover.

"Healthy people usually recover within one to three days at home without medical care, but the very young and the elderly are at greater risk for dehydration and severe illness," **said Florida Department of Health in Indian River County Health Officer Miranda Swanson.** "People must wash their hands thoroughly, especially after using the restroom, as well as before preparing and consuming food."

Norovirus is the most common cause of gastroenteritis in the United States, sickening an estimated 21 million people annually. Norovirus is easily spread from person to person by consuming food and drinks contaminated with an infected person's stool, touching contaminated surfaces and objects, or caring for someone infected with the virus. It is resistant to disinfectants and can remain on surfaces for days to weeks. The virus is easily spread in places where people gather, like daycare centers, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, schools, and cruise ships. Washing your hands can help to protect yourself and prevent the spread of the virus if you are sick.

- Wash hands with soap and running water after using the toilet, changing diapers, and before eating or handling food. Hand sanitizers should not be used in place of washing with soap and water.
- Stay home for at least 24 hours after symptoms stop.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- When you are sick and for at least 2 to 3 days after you recover, DO NOT prepare food or care for others.
- Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness. Use chlorine bleach solution (1/3 cup of household bleach per gallon of water) for non-porous surfaces.
- Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with stool or vomitus; use hot water and soap when washing.

More information on norovirus can be found at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: <http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/>

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