Norovirus Identified in Rosehill Elementary Illness

JOHNSON COUNTY, KANSAS (Aug. 22, 2012) – The Johnson County Department of Health and Environment and Rosehill Elementary School in the Shawnee Mission School District received notification from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment that the cause of illness at the school has been identified as norovirus.

Norovirus is a highly contagious virus that causes gastroenteritis in people. Gastroenteritis is an inflammation of the lining of the stomach and intestines. Like all viral infections, norovirus are not affected by treatment with antibiotics and cannot grow outside of a person’s body.

People infected with norovirus are the most contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill to at least three days after recovery. Norovirus can be found in your vomit or stool even before you start feeling sick. The virus can stay in your stool for two weeks or more after you feel better. So, it is important to continue washing your hands often during this time. **People should refrain from going to work or school until they are symptom-free for at least 24 hours without the use of medication.**

The symptoms of norovirus illness usually include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping. The illness often begins suddenly, and the infected person may feel very sick. In most people the illness is self-limiting, with symptoms lasting for about one or two days.

Dehydration may occur if people are unable to drink enough liquids to replace the liquids they lose because of vomiting and diarrhea. It is important to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids.
People can become infected with norovirus by:

- Norovirus is very contagious and can spread easily from person to person through direct contact (for example, when caring for someone with illness, or sharing food or utensils with someone who is ill) or touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus, and then placing their hand in their mouth.

- Both stool and vomit are infectious. Particular care should be taken with young children in diapers who may have diarrhea.

Decrease your chance of coming in contact with norovirus by following these steps:

- Frequently wash your hands.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness by using a bleach-based household cleaner.
- Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with virus after an episode of illness (use hot water and soap).
- Flush or discard any vomitus and/or stool in the toilet and make sure that the surrounding area is kept clean.
- Persons who are infected with norovirus should not prepare food while they have symptoms and for at least two to three days after they recover from their illness.

Wash your hands the correct way:

- Wet hands with clean running water and apply soap generously. Warm water is best.
- Rub hands together to make a lather and scrub all surfaces, including under fingernails.
- Continue rubbing hands together for 15-20 seconds. (Imagine singing "Happy Birthday" twice).
- Rinse hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer. If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet.
- Always use soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty. Hand sanitizer doesn’t kill all germs that can make you ill.

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About Johnson County

Nested in the southwestern quadrant of the Kansas City Metropolitan Region, Johnson County, Kansas is a community of choice with a current population of more than 544,000, making it the most populated of the 105 counties in Kansas, but traditionally having the lowest mill levy in the state. Johnson County offers a vibrant quality of life including nationally recognized schools, libraries and parks where businesses and families choose to locate and call their home. For more information visit the county’s website at [www.jocogov.org](http://www.jocogov.org).