NEWS RELEASE

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Take steps to prevent the Norovirus

Good hygiene is the key to staying healthy in the winter months

VILSECK, Germany - -

What is it?
Norovirus is a virus that is commonly seen in the winter months. This virus may cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and sometimes stomach cramping. You may also get a low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue. These symptoms can be expected to last 1 or 2 days and in most cases there are no long term health effects.

Symptoms
One side effect that occasionally occurs with Norovirus infection is dehydration. It can be difficult to drink enough liquids to replace the liquids lost because of vomiting and diarrhea. This is especially serious in the very young, the elderly, and people who have problems with their immune systems. If this occurs, hospitalization may be required.

Norovirus is passed from an infected person's stool or vomit to a non-infected person. This can occur from touching surfaces or objects contaminated with Norovirus, and then putting your hands in your mouth; or from eating or drinking food or liquids that have been contaminated with the virus.

Once you are infected, it will usually take about 1 to 2 days for symptoms to appear and you may be contagious for as long as 2 weeks after recovery.

Treatment
Currently, there is no antiviral medication that works against Norovirus and there is no vaccine to prevent infection. Since this is a viral infection, antibiotics won't work to kill off the bug either. Treatment is usually rest and drinking a lot of fluids.

Good Hygiene is the Key to Prevention
Washing your hands, and limiting direct contact with people who may have an active infection is critical in stopping the spread of the disease. Workers in day-care centers and schools should pay special attention hygiene since this virus is very contagious and can spread rapidly in childcare settings.

Persons who are infected with Norovirus should not prepare food while they have symptoms and for 3 days post-recovery. Food that may have been contaminated by an ill person should be disposed of properly.

You can decrease your chance of coming in contact with Noroviruses by following these preventive steps:

- Frequently wash your hands, especially after toilet visits and changing diapers and before eating or preparing food.
- Carefully wash fruits and vegetables, and steam oysters before eating.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness. Use a bleach-based household cleaner or a quarter cup of bleach to a gallon of water solution.
- 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.

Questions or comments? Please contact the Bavaria MEDDAC Department of Preventive Medicine at 471-2138 or bavaria.prevmed@amedd.army.mil.

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