

February 6, 2014

**Message to Members of the North Vancouver School Community regarding
Norovirus Activity**

Dear Student, Parent or Staff

Norovirus outbreaks occur every year; however, the activity this winter has been unusually intense. Infections are very common, especially in schools. While norovirus is very contagious, not everyone exposed will get sick.

Norovirus illness usually includes a sudden onset of nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Though people can get quite uncomfortable, the illness is generally not serious. People infected with norovirus usually get better on their own in a few days, without treatment. Because a virus causes these infections, antibiotics do not work.

The main source of norovirus is vomit and stool of infected people. As virus can survive on hard surfaces (such as counter tops, sink taps, door knobs) for a long time, attention to proper hand washing and cleanliness of washrooms and common touch surfaces is extremely important.

To prevent the spread of norovirus within the school, we recommend the following:

- Frequent hand washing with soap and warm water for at least 30 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom or before eating or preparing food.
- Not sharing food or drinks.
- People with symptoms of diarrhea or vomiting should stay home 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.

This will help stop spread of the virus within the school community.

We encourage parents to continue to report gastrointestinal symptoms when calling schools to let them know their child is sick. We will work closely with schools to assess any situations and advise on appropriate control measures. Please continue to call the Child and Youth Public Health ON Call Nurse at 604-983-6714 if you have questions or for **schools** to report increased illness rates.

Additional information can be located at the following web locations:

Norovirus: <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile87.stm>

Handwashing: <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile85.stm>

Sincerely,



Mark Lysyshyn, MD, MPH, FRCPC
Medical Health Officer
Vancouver Coastal Health, North Shore