SUSPECTED NOROVIRUS IN COUNTY SCHOOLS
Numerous instances of student gastro-intestinal upset in North County

(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.) – Northern Santa Barbara County schools in the Orcutt School District (specifically Alice Shaw, Joe Nightingale, Patterson Road, Pine Grove, and Ralph Dunlap Schools) and the Manzanita Charter School on Vandenberg Air Force Base are reporting numerous cases of gastro-intestinal symptoms consistent with a possible outbreak of Norovirus. Norovirus typically peaks in the winter months (January/February), however California as a whole is seeing outbreaks of Norovirus in schools at this time and other counties have been placed on alert for additional outbreaks.

All schools involved are working cooperatively with the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department (PHD) and are immediately instituting proper cleaning methods and all necessary measures to halt the spread of the virus. These outbreaks are very likely Norovirus and the PHD has begun its investigation and is working through the weekend to conduct appropriate lab testing. Results are expected to be available this weekend.

Norovirus outbreaks are caused by a group of related viruses that account for more than 90 percent of gastrointestinal illness outbreaks in the United States each year. Noroviruses can be found in stool and vomit and are highly contagious. They are known for sweeping through schools, office buildings and other close quarters, and infecting a large number of people. Symptoms of Norovirus illness usually begin about 24 to 48 hours after close exposure to Norovirus and can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure and include:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal cramps
- Low grade fever or none at all

Symptoms
People may feel very sick and vomit multiple times and/or have many loose stools a day. Most people get better within 1 or 2 days, and they have no long-term health effects related to their illness. However, shedding of the virus may continue for 1-2 weeks. At times, affected individuals, usually the very young and elderly may become dehydrated as they are unable to drink enough liquids to replace the liquids lost because of vomiting and diarrhea.

Prevention
The spread of Norovirus can be prevented by practicing proper hand hygiene. Important strategies include washing hands with soap and water, especially after using the toilet and changing diapers and always before eating and preparing or handling food. The community should be aware that with these reported outbreaks folks should use good hand hygiene and stay home if sick until 48-hours without symptoms.

For more information on Norovirus, please visit https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/index.html

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