Santa Barbara County Public Health Department continues to receive reports of Norovirus outbreaks in congregate facilities beyond the traditional October-April "season". 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 are highly contagious and are known for sweeping through schools, office buildings and other close quarters, and infecting a large number of people.

**Symptoms of Norovirus:**
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal cramps
- Low grade fever or none at all

**Seriousness of illness:**
People may feel very sick and vomit multiple times and/or have many loose stools a day, but most people get better within 1 or 2 days, and they have no long-term health effects related to their illness. However, sometimes people are unable to drink enough liquids to replace the liquids they lost because of vomiting and diarrhea. These persons can become dehydrated and may need special medical attention. During Norovirus infection, this problem with dehydration is usually only seen among the very young, the elderly, and people with other illness.

**Incubation:**
Symptoms of Norovirus illness usually begin about 24 to 48 hours after ingestion of the virus, but they can appear as early as 12 hours after exposure.

**Period of communicability:**
People infected with Norovirus are contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill to at least 3 days after recovery. The virus may be shed (discharged from the body through vomit or stool) for 2 weeks or more after recovery, although it is unclear whether the virus shed during this time is infectious.

**Common routes for Norovirus transmission:**
- Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with Norovirus, then touching one’s mouth, nose or eyes.
- Having direct contact with someone who is ill with Norovirus while caring for them, or by sharing foods or utensils, etc.
- Eating or drinking something that is contaminated with Norovirus in which case the illness is described as foodborne.
- Both stool and vomit are infectious. Particular care should be taken with young children in diapers who may have diarrhea.
Norovirus transmission prevention measures:

- Wash hands with soap and warm water after toilet visits and before preparing or eating food.
- People with symptoms of Norovirus illness should not prepare food or provide patient care.
- Cook all shellfish thoroughly before eating.
- Wash raw vegetables before eating.
- 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).
- Congregate institutions need to assure a high level of personal hygiene to avoid person-to-person spread.
- Caretakers need to increase precautions to avoid transmission, particularly by washing hands frequently and especially before and after patient care.

Acute gastrointestinal outbreaks are reportable to the Disease Control Program by FAXing a Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) to: (805) 681-4069 or by calling our 24/7 phone number: (805) 681-5280.

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Alert

California is currently experiencing a Pertussis epidemic. Please review the following ACIP recommendations for immunizing against Pertussis and take measures to assure all your patients are up-to-date with their immunizations. Children require DTaP doses at 2, 4, 6 and 15 months for their primary series. A booster dose of DTaP is given at 4-6 years before starting kindergarten. A booster with Tdap is then given at 10-12 years before starting middle school, and any teenager who missed this adolescent dose should be immunized immediately with Tdap. Replace one Td booster in adults with one dose of Tdap. Immunity wanes with time. Tdap should be given to all women planning to become pregnant, as well as their significant others, or at anytime during their 2nd and 3rd trimester to avoid transmission to their newborns. A Tdap booster should also be given to anyone having close contact with an infant, including childcare providers and healthcare workers.

An accelerated schedule may be recommended in the event of a local Pertussis outbreak with vaccination given at 6, 10 and 14 weeks of age with the 4th dose being given 6-12 months after the 3rd dose.

Confirmed, Probable, Suspect or Deceased Pertussis

Cases by Referral Date or Death Date

Santa Barbara County

2010

N = 7

- Total confirmed: 4
- Total probable: 3
- Total deaths: 0
- Total hospitalized: 1
- Age range (3 months - 27 years)
  - Mean age: 7.1 years
- 6 North, 1 South, 0 Central county

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul