



**McHenry County  
Department of Health**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Gastrointestinal illness common this time of year  
*Long-term care facilities report norovirus***

**WOODSTOCK IL** – McHenry County Department of Health (MCDH) reports an outbreak of norovirus in 3 facilities providing assisted living, skilled nursing and memory care (also known as long-term care facilities - LTC) in McHenry County; 129 individuals are ill, with 14 cases confirmed as norovirus. Administrators are cooperating with MCDH staff by reporting illness, educating staff and residents on hand washing and infection control techniques to reduce this common illness. Unlike influenza – which is an upper respiratory virus – noroviruses are generally the culprit that causes “stomach flu”, affecting the intestinal tract with nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. The virus is particularly problematic in LTC facilities whose residents tend to be frail with chronic illnesses. Norovirus is highly contagious, spreads quickly from person-to-person and cannot be treated with antibiotics. Symptoms usually last between 24 hours and 48 hours.

Hand washing education will be provided to other LTC facilities over the next week as a prevention measure. Good hygiene practices are important for everyone to prevent the spread of illness.

- Frequent washing of hands, especially after toileting, before eating and preparing food.
- If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer that is 60% alcohol-based to kill viruses.
- Thorough cleaning and disinfecting of high touch areas (e.g. telephones, railings, tables) using a bleach-based household disinfectant.
- Immediately removing and washing clothing or linens that may be contaminated with diarrhea or vomit (using hot water and soap).

If you are ill with norovirus symptoms, do not visit LTC facilities to minimize transferring illness until you have recovered (typically 2 days). Please contact your healthcare provider for further advice. For more information on norovirus, go to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

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***“Working to prevent disease and promote health and safety for all people of McHenry County since 1966.”***