**Norovirus & Outbreaks**

**Norovirus** is a contagious virus that causes diarrhea and vomiting. Outbreaks of norovirus are common, but can be especially problematic in healthcare facilities.

If you suspect a norovirus outbreak or any disease outbreak, contact your local health department or the Tennessee Department of Health main office (615-741-7247) for assistance.

The health department can assist by:
- Providing norovirus-specific cleaning guidance
- Investigating the cause and spread of illness
- Identifying ways to stop the outbreak

**Prevention resources can be found here:**
- [https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/multimedia.html](https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/multimedia.html)
- [https://waterandhealth.org/resources/posters/#norovirus](https://waterandhealth.org/resources/posters/#norovirus)

**Norovirus prevention in long-term care facilities guidance can be found here:**
- [https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/documents/LTCF_guidelines.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/documents/LTCF_guidelines.pdf)
An infection control program must include **seven** essential elements. Written infection control policies are required for each element.

1. **Infection Control Risk Assessment** is a written document that is updated at least annually and clearly prioritizes infection control actions for the facility.

2. **Hand Hygiene** should specify:
   - Alcohol-based hand sanitizer is preferred except when *C. difficile* or norovirus are suspected, which require soap and water.
   - Hand hygiene dispensers are available at points of care.
   - The facility performs hand hygiene audits and provides staff feedback.

3. **Contact Precautions** which utilize personal protective equipment (PPE) and transmission-based precautions should include:
   - Signage that clearly shows the type of PPE needed prior to entering a resident’s room.

4. **State Reportable Diseases** guidance including:
   - Have a current, readily available list of the state reportable conditions.
   - Report in required timeframes (online or using the PH-1600 form).
   - Ensure the microbiology lab used submits required isolates to the State Laboratory.

5. **Injection Safety** should specify:
   - **Use of One Needle, One Syringe, Only One Time**
   - Never administer medications from a single-dose vial or IV bag to multiple patients.
   - Limit the use of multiple-dose vials and dedicate them to a single patient whenever possible.

6. **Infection Control Education** is required for all clinical and environmental services staff (EVS) upon hire and at least annually with return demonstration. This includes:
   - EVS education for cleaning and disinfection of high touch areas for resident and common areas (shower rooms, etc.).
   - Education to ensure that equipment is cleaned and disinfected between patients with clarity about responsible party (e.g. glucometers → nursing staff).

7. **Water Management Program** for prevention of *Legionella* and other waterborne pathogens:
   - Create a team focused on keeping the facility’s water safe.
   - Understand the building water system and identify areas where *Legionella* could grow or spread.
   - Take actions to prevent and control the growth and spread of *Legionella*.
   - Document the program and activities.

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**Questions?**
Call: 615-741-7247
Email: HAI.Health@tn.gov

**TN Department of Health**