

NOROVIRUS TESTING AT NCSLPH

BACKGROUND

Norovirus (NV) symptoms include sudden onset of vomiting accompanied by watery diarrhea, nausea, abdominal cramps, fever, or headache, lasting anywhere from 12-60 hours. The incubation period is approximately 24-48 hours. Transmission may occur person-to-person or through the fecal-oral route via fecally contaminated food or water. Infection prevention and control measures include hand washing after using the bathroom and before handling food items, wearing masks when cleaning contaminated areas, handling soiled linens as little as possible, flushing or discarding any vomitus and/or stool in the toilet and making sure that the surrounding area is kept clean, and cleaning all surfaces with germicidal product (10% bleach).

NCSLPH tests for norovirus during outbreak situations only. Local health departments should telephone GCDC at (919) 733-3419 when enteric disease outbreaks are suspected in a day care center, nursing home or restaurant. In addition, the Food, Lodging and Institutional Sanitation Branch of the Division of Environmental Health should be notified at (919) 733-2905 when restaurant- or institution-associated illness is suspected.

SPECIMEN SUBMISSION

To ensure that the event is eligible for outbreak investigation, contact the General Communicable Disease and Control (GCDC) epidemiologists (919-733-3419). After approval by GCDC, submit one Clary-Blair (not raw stool) for each patient and request NV and enterics testing. Cary-Blair transport media for collection of feces is available for purchase from the laboratory mailroom on-line at <http://slph.state.nc.us/labportal>. Each specimen must be clearly labeled with the patient's name and accompanied by [DHHS form #3390](#). To ship specimen to the NCSLPH, place completed Enteric Bacteriology [DHHS form #3390](#) (one form for each specimen) in outer container to avoid contamination in case of breakage or leakage. Follow all relevant packaging and shipping requirements. **Unlabeled specimens will not be tested.**

Please submit at least five and no more than ten specimens for testing. For submissions of five or more samples, NV testing will be performed within one business day of receipt and results reported within two business days of receipt. For submissions less than five, samples will be tested for enterics and samples will be held until five samples from the same site are received. NV testing will be performed when five samples from the same outbreak are received. In this case, it may be five to seven business days until NV results are reported.

RESULT REPORTING

The results will be reported for a positive norovirus test as “NV RNA detected by RT-PCR” and for a negative norovirus test as “NV RNA not detected by RT-PCR”. The submitter will be notified by telephone of the results and the official report will be forwarded by mail. Additionally, GCDC will be notified of the tests results.