

# Environmental health checklist when responding to a norovirus outbreak

1. Contact the establishment and have them begin gathering a contact list for all employees and credit card receipts, reservation lists, or takeout orders for the meal date in question. In addition, ask the following questions:
  - Has the business received any complaints? If they have and the complaints were not reported, inform them that this is a violation of the food code.
  - How many food service workers does the business employ?
2. Gather employee screening forms and copy enough interview forms. A unique form is developed by epi for each outbreak. The Tennessee warning is included on the form and must be read to each employee before the interview. Head out to restaurant as soon as possible.
3. Ask management what their illness policy is. Ask to see their illness log and assess recent employee illness.
4. Interview all employees, including management. If employees have been ill, they must be excluded for at least 72 hours after their last symptom of vomiting and diarrhea.
5. Ask ill employees if they would be willing to submit a stool sample. If so, obtain their name, address, and telephone number and coordinate with epi on getting stool kits out to employee.
6. Obtain credit card receipts, reservation lists, and/or takeout/carry out orders for meal date in question. Provide these to epi as soon as possible. These are used to interview additional patrons and determine if there is a particular food item that is contaminated.
7. Obtain restaurant menu (if different from online menu) and ask if the establishment had any specials on the date in question. Provide menu to epi as soon as possible. This is needed to interview additional patrons.
8. Put illness screening form in place so management can screen all employees before they begin their shift to ensure that they have not been recently ill.
9. Provide norovirus factsheets and educational materials to management.
10. While on site, conduct an environmental assessment. Review employee handwashing and bare-hand contact policies (e.g., minimizing bare-hands with ready-to-eat foods).
11. Wash, rinse, and disinfect all food contact surfaces, equipment, and utensils in the kitchen area. The establishment should contact their chemical supplier to obtain a product that has a “norovirus claim” to clean all surfaces. If they don’t have a chemical supplier, they can use 1,000 ppm bleach (1/3 cup per 1 gallon) with a 5-minute contact time. Most quats are ineffective against norovirus. When using a food contact sanitizer at disinfection strength

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(like 1000ppm bleach), make sure to thoroughly rinse off equipment/surfaces after the 5-minute contact time has been reached.

It is also a good idea to clean and sanitize the inside of the ice bin, door handles, faucet handles, tabletops, etc. (any areas where people touch). If obtaining a product with a norovirus claim, management must make sure it is appropriate for food contact surfaces and read the label for proper application instructions (some products require a longer contact time and/or a rinse with potable water after disinfection). Here is the EPA list of disinfectants that are effective against norovirus (updated 2018):

[https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-04/documents/list\\_g\\_disinfectant\\_list\\_3\\_15\\_18.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-04/documents/list_g_disinfectant_list_3_15_18.pdf)

12. If there have been employees who worked while ill or weren't excluded for an appropriate length of time and then handled/prepared food, consider discarding ready-to-eat food items that may have been contaminated. This includes ice from the ice machine.
13. If there is vomit in the establishment, the best way to prevent transmission is to physically remove it as soon as possible by scrubbing it off of the carpet/floor. Worker should wear gloves, discard all cloths/material used to clean up vomit and thoroughly wash hands after. Do not use a vacuum to clean vomit on carpeted areas. Vacuuming will aerosolize particles. You can use a steamer. Here is a factsheet on clean-up:

<https://www.publichealthmdc.com/documents/Cleanup%20of%20Norovirus%20Poster.pdf>