

NOROVIRUS STRIKES IN SNOHOMISH COUNTY



Recently, a restaurant in Snohomish County experienced a food borne outbreak of Norovirus. Some 50 customers and staff became ill with the typical “stomach flu” symptoms associated with this virus, namely nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping. Symptoms usually appear 24–48 hours after exposure, but may occur as early as 12 hours. Most people recover within 1 to 2 days, although the elderly and the very young may experience more lasting effects. There is not any medication currently available which can prevent Norovirus. Many of us may already be aware of this illness as it is frequently the one that has struck so many cruise ships and been responsible for recent school closures.

Why is Norovirus such a concern to food service establishments? The virus is typically passed by the fecal oral route. It is found in the stool and vomit of infected people and may get on the hands either in caring for yourself or for others who are sick. The virus may then be passed to others by failing to wash hands and then using bare hands to touch food, utensils, or other items which may go into the mouths of others.

Employees of the Snohomish County restaurant were working while sick and handling salads and other foods with their bare hands. The Washington State Department of Health reports that in 2006 more than half of all food borne illness statewide was caused by Norovirus passed by ill food workers who did not properly wash their hands and failed to take steps to avoid bare hand contact of ready-to-eat foods.

How can Norovirus be prevented at the food service establishment where I work? First by not allowing employees to work while sick, especially when they have the symptoms of Norovirus. Since sick persons may be contagious for several hours before becoming ill and then 3–14 days afterwards, avoiding bare hand contact of ready-to-eat foods and utensils thru the use of tongs, scoops, spoons, or gloves becomes critically important. Remember too, use of these methods begins with proper handwashing. Also, handwashing after using the restroom or anytime before beginning work is just as important.



Let's take these simple steps to avoid any further food borne illness in our county.

Source: Centers for Disease Control. <http://www.cdc.gov/>

Article information: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/gastro/norovirus-foodhandlers.htm>

SPECIAL ADVISORY

Please be advised that a company sounding like a state agency has been contacting restaurants in an attempt to sell handwashing signs. It is required that handwashing signs be visible to employees at all handwash stations and restrooms. However, handwash signs and stickers can be obtained for free from Snohomish Health District. Please call 425.339.5250 if you are in need of any handwashing signs.



Dial-Stem vs. Digital Thermometers

Dial-stem thermometers have been commonly used in the restaurant industry for a long time. However, there are some limitations for them when measuring certain foods. Thin foods like burgers, eggs, or teriyaki are difficult to measure because dial-stem thermometers require a certain thickness of food to read an accurate temperature. For these “thin” measurements, dial-stem thermometers are inadequate.

Digital thermometers are “tip sensitive” and can use a smaller, “thinner” amount of food to obtain a temperature measurement. They are also more accurate and easier to read. For this reason, digital thermometers may be required by your inspector. Most cost between ten and twenty dollars and use a small battery like the one in a wristwatch. All thermometers should be National Sanitation Foundation approved.

FOOD WORKER CARD CLASSES AT THE FAIRGROUNDS

- What:** Food Worker Card Classes
Where: New Horizons Christian Church, 18200 Cascade View Drive, Monroe
When: Wednesday, August 22, 2007 (ONE DAY ONLY)
10:00 AM & 2:00 PM (2 classes)
Cost: \$10.00 - Attend the class, take the test, and get your card that day!



SNOHOMISH HEALTH DISTRICT

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIVISION
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www.snohd.org

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT NEWSLETTER

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FOOD WORKER CARD CLASS INFORMATION

COST: \$10 cash only

BE ON TIME: Classes last approximately 1-1/2 hours, with no breaks. Classes start precisely on time and no one will be allowed to enter after the class begins.

WEEKLY LOCATIONS AND TIMES:

Everett: *Snohomish Health District*, 3020 Rucker Avenue, Everett, in the first floor auditorium

Monday - 3 PM

Thursday - 10 AM and 3 PM

Third Monday and Third Thursday of every month at 6 PM

Lynnwood: *Elks Lodge*, 6620 196th Street SW, Lynnwood

Tuesday - 10 AM and 2:30 PM

Call the food recording line 425.339.5260 for information on holiday cancellations and offsite class locations. Please allow plenty of time to find street parking at the Everett location.

SPANISH FOOD WORKER CLASS INFORMATION

Classes in Spanish are offered twice a month in Everett at the Snohomish Health District office:

First Tuesday of every month at **10 AM**

Third Tuesday of every month at **3 PM**

Español

Las clases en Español se ofrece dos veces al mes:

Primer Martes de cada mes a las **10 AM**

El Tercer Martes de cada mes a las **3 PM**

MANAGER CERTIFICATION AND RECERTIFICATION 2007 SCHEDULE

Certification Classes:

Date: Oct 3, 10, 17, 24

(You must be available for all sessions)

Time: 9 AM - 1 PM (16 hours total)

Cost: \$144.00 (materials included)

Benefits: 5-year Manager Certification and eligibility to enroll in the SHD Self-Inspection program.

This program can reduce the annual permit fees for your establishment by up to 25%.

Class size is limited to the first 20 paid registrants.

Recertification Class:

Date: Thurs., Oct 18

Time: 9 AM - 1 PM

Cost: \$112.00