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OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

St. Clair County Health Department

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TO: St. Clair County Providers, Hospital ICPs, Emergency Departments, ED Physicians Walk-in Clinics, SCC Schools, LTC Facilities

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INCREASED NOROVIRUS AND NOROVIRUS-LIKE ACTIVITY DETECTED

Norovirus activity generally peaks in January to March. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) surveillance efforts indicate that complaints of vomiting and diarrhea activity has begun to increase. The MDHHS monitors trends in syndromic presentations of Emergency Department (ED) visits using the Michigan Syndromic Surveillance System (MSSS). These complaints have increased over the past few weeks. St. Clair County Health Department (SCCHD) received reports of three outbreaks in 2018 (two acute viral gastroenteritis outbreaks and one norovirus outbreak), the most recent one in November 2018.

Norovirus is transmitted from an infected person, contaminated food or water, or by touching contaminated surfaces. The virus causes symptoms of nausea, abdominal cramping, low grade fever, diarrhea and/or vomiting. This virus is highly contagious. Persons infected with norovirus can become symptomatic 10-48 hours after exposure and individuals will remain contagious during illness and up to 2 weeks after recovery.

Recommendations:

- Persons with presentation of these symptoms should be excluded from school and group activities and remain excluded until 48 hours after signs of norovirus end. Ill high-risk employees can continue to shed the virus and should not return to work until 72 hours after symptoms have resolved.
- Prevention is key. Share these tips:
 - Wash hands frequently with warm water and soap for 20 seconds. Hand sanitizers do **NOT** work against norovirus.
 - Properly disinfect all contaminated surfaces using diluted chlorine bleach.
 - Wash all soiled clothing and linens.
- MDHHS Bureau of Laboratories is the only laboratory in Michigan that is validated for testing and therefore, the only laboratory that can confirm that an outbreak of norovirus has occurred. PCR testing is free and can be arranged through SCCHD Communicable Disease program. Stool samples from three to six (3-6) symptomatic patients are required for testing. Negative stool samples undergo additional testing for astrovirus and sapovirus. Testing is for the investigation of norovirus and norovirus-like outbreaks only and physicians cannot request individual testing for diagnostic purposes.
- Report all viral gastrointestinal outbreaks as soon as possible to SCCHD.
- Additional norovirus resources, including disinfection guidance and fact sheets can be found at www.scchealth.co .

Call SCCHD with questions or to report suspect outbreaks (810) 987-5300 during regular business hours. Refer to the “After Hours Emergency Contact List” for after-hours contact.