



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P. O. BOX 3378
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File:

April 6, 2022

MEDICAL ADVISORY: NOROVIRUS OUTBREAK LINKED TO RAW OYSTERS

- A MULTINATIONAL OUTBREAK OF NOROVIRUS INFECTIONS HAS BEEN LINKED TO RAW OYSTERS FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA WITH DISTRIBUTION TO MULTIPLE U.S. STATES, INCLUDING HAWAII
- SUSPECTED CASES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED IN HAWAII BUT NONE CONFIRMED TO DATE
- HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS CARING FOR PATIENTS WITH SUSPECTED NOROVIRUS INFECTION SHOULD ASK ABOUT RAW OYSTER CONSUMPTION AND REPORT SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED OUTBREAK CASES TO THE HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
- STOOL SHOULD BE TESTED BY PCR OR GI PANEL FOR NOROVIRUS; FORWARD POSITIVE SPECIMENS TO THE STATE LABORATORIES DIVISION FOR CONFIRMATORY TESTING AND GENOTYPING

Dear Healthcare Provider:

The Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) has been working with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and with Canadian public health authorities regarding a [norovirus outbreak linked to raw oysters from British Columbia, Canada](#). The FDA has confirmed that potentially contaminated raw oysters harvested in the south and central parts of Baynes Sound, British Columbia, Canada, were distributed to restaurants and retailers throughout the United States, including Hawaii. There have been 91 illnesses reported throughout 13 states. There have been no confirmed norovirus cases in Hawaii, however, the Disease Investigation Branch (DIB) is investigating four suspected norovirus cases linked to raw oyster consumption. There has been one report of hospitalization due to gastrointestinal illness, but no confirmatory testing was conducted.

The FDA and the states conducted a trace forward investigation to determine where the raw oysters were distributed and to ensure they are removed from the food supply.

Healthcare providers should suspect norovirus infections in patients who consumed the possibly contaminated raw oysters and have symptoms which include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain. Other symptoms may include fever, headache, and body aches. Most clinical infections with norovirus are self-limited (24-72 hours) and there is no specific medicine to treat norovirus. Norovirus illness can lead to dehydration especially in young children, older adults, and people with other illnesses. Patients with norovirus illness should drink plenty of liquids to prevent dehydration.

For suspect cases, please order whole stool (preferred) or stool in Cary Blair medium for polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or Gastrointestinal (GI) Panel testing, specifically requesting norovirus testing, as some laboratories do not routinely test all stool specimens for norovirus. Ideally, specimens should

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be obtained during the acute phase of illness (i.e., within 48-72 hours after onset) while stools are still liquid or semisolid because this is when the amount of viral excretion is greatest. Please request any identified norovirus specimens to be sent to the State Laboratories Division for confirmation and genotyping. Additional information on specimen collection, storage and transport is available on the [State Laboratories Division website](#).

Please remind patients with confirmed or suspected norovirus to:

- Carefully wash hands with soap and water often
- NOT prepare food if they are sick
- NOT share food with anyone
- NOT go swimming
- Stay home from school or from healthcare, food service, or childcare jobs while sick and until asymptomatic.

Report any clinically suspected cases of norovirus immediately. Do NOT wait for laboratory confirmation:

Oahu (Disease Reporting Line)(808) 586-4586
Maui District Health Office(808) 984-8213
Kauai District Health Office(808) 241-3563
Big Island District Health Office (Hilo)(808) 933-0912
Big Island District Health Office (Kona).....(808) 322-4877
After hours on Oahu(808) 600-3625
After hours on neighbor islands.....(800) 360-2575 (toll free)

We appreciate your assistance in monitoring for and preventing norovirus infection among Hawaii's residents and visitors.

Sincerely,



Sarah K. Kemble, M.D.
State Epidemiologist
Department of Health