FACTS

• Norovirus is a highly contagious virus and the principal cause of worldwide acute gastroenteritis epidemics in all age groups.
• Healthcare facilities and their staff are better equipped to respond to norovirus when protocols for preventive measures are in place before norovirus season arrives.

TRANSMISSION

• Fecal-oral contact, contaminated hands and surfaces, food contaminated by ill healthcare workers, exposure to aerosolized vomitus
• Low infectious dose, short incubation period, high viral load for 48 hours, virulent on surfaces for long periods, resistant to disinfectants, heat, and cold

PREVENTION

Complete a preseason preparedness assessment and action plan:

• Keep a daily unit record of symptomatic patients; notify infection prevention staff
• Wash hands with soap and water for at least one minute after contact with diarrheal patients and their environment, as well as before food handling
• Observe contact precautions and cohort symptomatic patients until 48 hours after resolution of symptoms
• Exclude ill staff members from work until symptom-free for 48 hours
• Require access to separate toilets or commodes for symptomatic patients

OUTBREAK

• Early case detection, contact precautions, strict hand hygiene
• Enhanced environmental cleaning two or three times a day with 10:1 bleach or Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved disinfectant
• Use of personal protective equipment to clean up vomit and feces
• Avoid agitation of linen
• Suspend group activities, close wards to admissions and transfers
• Assign ill residents to recovered staff
• Screen or restrict visitors