FACTS

Norovirus is a highly contagious gastrointestinal illness, also referred to as the “stomach flu.” It spreads through the vomit and feces of people who are sick and, less often, through the air. No vaccine is available for norovirus, and antibiotics are not an effective treatment for the illness. Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority data shows a significant increase in cases of norovirus and norovirus-like gastrointestinal illnesses in the first quarter of 2010.

HOW DO YOU CONTRACT THE ILLNESS?

Norovirus may be spread through food or liquids contaminated with norovirus by an infected food handler. Particles may be passed from person to person via contaminated hands and objects and then ingested when hands are brought to the mouth; exposure to the vomit or feces of an infected person and contact with contaminated surfaces may also transmit the virus.

IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS YOU MAY BE ILL WITH NOROVIRUS:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Watery diarrhea
- Stomach cramping
- Low fever
- Chills
- Headache
- Muscle aches

If your symptoms persist, you should seek medical attention immediately.

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF FROM NOROVIRUS?

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after handling food, using the restroom, changing diapers, caring for the ill, or cleaning soiled linens or surfaces.
- Avoid eating foods prepared by anyone who has diarrhea.
- Wash fruits and vegetables and steam oysters before eating them.
- Do not share utensils or drinking containers.
- Immediately wash in hot soapy water any clothing and linens soiled with vomit or diarrhea.
- Immediately use bleach-based household cleaner to clean and disinfect surfaces soiled with vomit or feces.
- Avoid direct contact with those who have been sick with norovirus until at least two weeks after they feel better, as they remain contagious.