



**Princeton Health Department**  
**1 Monument Drive,**  
**Princeton, NJ 08542**  
**609-497-7608**  
**www.princetonnj.gov**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **As Norovirus Season Begins, Public is Urged to Be** **Aware of Symptoms**

The Princeton Health Department has been receiving reports of increased gastrointestinal illness, which has resulted in increased surveillance of retail food establishments. Laboratory testing has not yet confirmed a specific organism at this time. Due to the nature of the symptoms and rapid onset of illness, norovirus is suspected in the majority of reported cases. Norovirus also happens to be the most common cause of gastrointestinal illness and is especially common during the winter months.

People can become infected with the stomach virus in several ways, including:

- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated;
- Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with the virus, and then placing their hand in their mouth;
- Having direct contact with another person who is infected and showing symptoms (for example, when caring for someone with illness, or sharing foods or eating utensils with someone who is ill).

You can decrease your chance of coming in contact with viruses by following these preventive steps:

- Frequently wash your hands, especially after toilet visits and before eating or preparing food. Hand sanitizers are not effective against most GI causing organisms, including norovirus.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness by using a bleach-based household cleaner.
- Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with virus after an episode of illness (use hot water and soap).

Persons who are infected with a stomach virus should try to minimize their contact with others while they are ill and should not prepare food during their illness. Food that may have been contaminated by an ill person should be disposed of properly.

For more information on norovirus please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/>