

Norovirus Gastroenteritis Associated with a Private Holiday Party

December

Hennepin County

On December 29, 2017, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) foodborne and waterborne illness hotline received a report of gastrointestinal illness associated with a private holiday party held at an apartment building in Minneapolis on December 27. The call was from the apartment building manager who had questions regarding environmental contamination and cleaning. MDH gathered additional information from party attendees via the party host and learned that one of the cases had a laboratory-confirmed norovirus infection. MDH contacted Hennepin County Public Health (HCPH) Epidemiology and an investigation was initiated.

MDH staff interviewed two party patrons; HCPH Epidemiology staff interviewed additional party attendees from a list provided by the party host.

A case was defined as a party attendee who developed vomiting and/or diarrhea (≥ 3 loose stools in a 24-hour period) after attending the party. No additional party attendees submitted a stool sample to the MDH Public Health Laboratory (PHL) for bacterial and viral testing.

Twenty extended family members attended the private holiday party. Nine party attendees were interviewed. Eight (89%) attendees met the case definition. Five cases (62%) were male. The median case age was 27 years (range, 8 to 68 years) for six of the cases; two cases declined to provide their age. Six cases (75%) reported diarrhea, six cases (75%) reported vomiting, and four cases (50%) reported cramps. No cases reported fever or bloody stools. The median incubation period was 39 hours (range, 31 to 67 hours). The median duration of symptoms was 24 hours (range, 0.25 to 25 hours) for the six cases who had recovered at the time of interview.

One case went to a hospital due to symptoms and complications from a previously existing health condition. This case was not hospitalized. A stool specimen submitted at this visit tested positive for norovirus.

The private holiday party was a potluck attended by an extended family group and included many food items either commercially prepared or prepared in private homes. Food items included meatballs, mini hotdogs in a sauce, pepperoni pizza bread, crackers, deli meats, cheeses, ham sandwiches, potato chips, tortilla chips, salsa, raw fruits and vegetables, vegetable dip, pumpkin bars, assorted cookies, water, wine, soda, and beer. Cases and the one control all reported eating several food items. Only two of the attendees interviewed reported bringing food items to the party – one attendee brought a jar of commercial salsa and tortilla chips; another attendee purchased buns and ham from the grocery store and prepared sandwiches for the party.

This was a foodborne outbreak of norovirus associated with a private holiday party. A specific vehicle and source of contamination were not identified, though it is possible that a family member who prepared food was ill prior to the event.