

At least 400 sickened in norovirus outbreak at Tacoma-area restaurants

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At least 400 people are sick after a confirmed norovirus outbreak at a Mexican restaurant in Tacoma, and another 10 to 15 people are possibly sick after eating at the chain's restaurant in a nearby suburb, health officials said.

The number of sick patrons of the two El Toro restaurants nearly [doubled since Wednesday](#). And on Friday, the first lawsuit against the chain of local eateries was filed in Pierce County Superior County for unspecified damages claiming the restaurants' owners were negligent and breached their duty to provide properly handled food.

The outbreak of the virus was reported at the restaurant in University Place and the Westgate area of Tacoma, according to the [Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department](#).

The Health Department began receiving reports of possible food poisoning on Jan. 5 from customers in separate households who had eaten at the Tacoma restaurant between Dec. 31 and Jan. 2. Earlier this week, the department learned of suspected cases at the University Place site from customers who had eaten there this past weekend.

The affected customers experienced one or two days of symptoms, which included vomiting and diarrhea, about 24 to 36 hours after eating at the restaurant, the Health Department reported.

The Health Department says nearly 400 customers became ill after eating at the restaurant's Tacoma site at 5716 N. 26th St., and 10 to 15

people were sickened after dining at the restaurant at 3820 Bridgeport Way W. in University Place.

A lab test identified the norovirus as the culprit in the Tacoma outbreak, but tests are pending for the University Place illnesses, according to the Health Department.

“We continue to receive more reports and interview more customers,” the Health Department wrote on its website Wednesday.

Both restaurants were closed for at least one day for thorough cleaning and sanitation, the department said. They have since reopened.

People who became ill after eating at El Toro may contact the Health Department at food@tpchd.org, at www.tpchd.org/reportfoodborneillness, or 253-798-4712.

The lawsuit was filed by a Seattle law firm Marler Clark, which specializes in food-safety issues, on behalf of a Tacoma woman who contracted norovirus after eating at El Toro on Jan. 2.

The woman submitted a stool sample to her physician, which tested positive for the virus. The [lawsuit for unspecified damages claims](#) the woman experienced repeated bouts of explosive diarrhea and vomited a dozen times in one day before recovering.

El Toro Inc. did not immediately respond to an email request for comment on Friday.

SOURCE: <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/at-least-400-sickened-in-norovirus-outbreak-at-tacoma-area-restaurants/>