

Norovirus Gastroenteritis Associated with an Event

February

McLeod County

On February 21, 2020, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) received a complaint of gastrointestinal illness from an individual whose mother became ill after attending a luncheon at an event space in Glencoe on the afternoon of February 16. The complainant reported that several of her mother's friends became ill as well. The complainant said they had contacted the owner of the ballroom, and the owner reported that they had been ill in the days leading up to the event. MDH Environmental Health was contacted and an investigation was initiated.

A separate complaint was received on February 24 from an individual who developed illness after attending the same event on February 16. The complainant reported knowing of others ill and said they would reach out and have them call into the hotline.

An MDH environmental health specialist visited the facility on February 21 to conduct an environmental health assessment, interview food workers, and instruct the restaurant to clean and sanitize with a product effective against norovirus.

MDH epidemiology staff interviewed attendees about illness history and food and beverage consumption at the event. A case was defined as an individual who developed vomiting and/or diarrhea (≥ 3 loose stools in a 24-hour period) after eating at the event space.

An illness history obtained from the second complainant revealed that their incubation period was 31 hours and that they experienced vomiting and diarrhea for 36 hours. MDH staff attempted to reach the mother of the original complainant multiple times but were unable to interview her. The complainant reported that their mother and several of her mother's friends experienced vomiting and diarrhea approximately 24-36 hours after the event.

The one interviewed case reported eating a ham sandwich, coleslaw, chips and cake at the event.

All four employees were interviewed by MDH environmental health staff, and two reported recent illness. Illness onsets for the employees were February 14 (vomiting and diarrhea) and February 15 (nausea and diarrhea). Both employees worked on February 16 and helped prepare the food items (sandwiches, coleslaw,

etc.) for the lunch. Both of the ill employees submitted stool kits and tested positive for norovirus GII. The restaurant was instructed to clean and sanitize all food contact surfaces, to screen all employees for illness, and to exclude any ill employees for at least 72 hours after resolution of symptoms.

This was a confirmed outbreak of norovirus gastroenteritis associated with a lunch event in Glencoe. Illness was reported from two separate groups. Two food workers worked while ill or recently ill and were the likely source of the outbreak. A specific vehicle was not identified.