

# Norovirus and the Hospitality Industry

A GUIDE FOR HOTEL OPERATORS



**Vancouver Coastal Health**  
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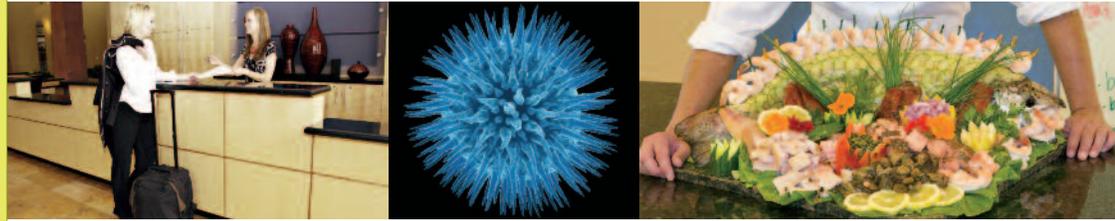
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## Background

Public Health agencies recognize the challenges facing industry and the private sector when illnesses occur that may impact business, tourism and the community.

The following recommendations result from a collaborative effort between the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, the Health Canada Cruise Ship Inspection Program and the BC Centre for Disease Control. The purpose in this distribution is to provide you with the knowledge to be able to handle situations that may arise in your business.



## Introduction

The overall focus is to provide information to staff and guests on hygienic measures to prevent illnesses and to outline cleaning and sanitizing protocols that can be implemented to reduce the impact of gastrointestinal illnesses occurring in your establishments.

The individual sections are:

**Norovirus and the Hospitality Industry** – is a one page educational flyer for staff explaining Norovirus and basic hygienic procedures.

**General Guidelines for Cleaning and Sanitizing<sup>1</sup>** – these documents cover general cleaning procedures for incidents of vomiting and/or diarrhea.

**Enhanced Procedures for Cleaning and Sanitizing<sup>1</sup>** – these documents outline additional procedures to implement when elevated numbers of illnesses of vomiting and/or diarrhea occur in the premises.

**Signage** – Signs alerting guests to illnesses and several examples of handwashing signs are provided. It is advisable to post handwashing instructions in all guest and staff bathrooms. Promotional signs are also helpful to remind visitors and staff to frequently wash hands. Provide handwashing signs in multiple languages.

<sup>1</sup>**Cleaning** is the removal of visible soil from a surface. **Sanitizing** is done after cleaning to reduce the number of germs on a surface to a hygienic level.

# Norovirus and the Hospitality Industry

## Prevention and Recognition for Hotel Operators

### What Is Norovirus?

**Noroviruses are a group of viruses that cause acute gastroenteritis, commonly referred to as the "stomach flu".** Community outbreaks are commonly reported in hospitals, long-term care facilities, childcare centres and schools. Outbreaks are also being reported in restaurants, catered events, hotels, resorts and cruise ships. Outbreaks occur throughout the year but the incidence is higher from the Fall through to the late Spring.

### What are the symptoms?

Most common:

- sudden onset of nausea
- vomiting
- non-bloody diarrhea
- stomach cramps

Other symptoms

- low-grade fever
- chills
- headache
- muscle aches
- fatigue.

The symptoms of norovirus usually begin 24 – 48 hours after becoming infected (range 12 to 48 hours).

The duration of the illness usually ranges from 12 to 60 hours.

Dehydration is the most common complication and can become a serious concern for people with poor health. Ill persons are advised to seek medical advice.



### How is the virus spread?

Norovirus is found in the vomit and diarrhea of infected people.

- The virus is commonly spread from person to person via contaminated hands. This can occur in several ways including having direct contact e.g. shaking hands, with an ill person (staff or guest) and then putting hand to mouth without washing your hands.
- The virus can also be spread by an infected person (staff or guest) contaminating food, eating and serving utensils, cups, plates etc. or environmental surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, water taps, table and countertops.
- When a person vomits the noroviruses may spread through the air, and contaminate surrounding surfaces.



BC Centre for Disease Control



# Tips for Prevention & Recognition of Norovirus Outbreaks

While it is not possible to prevent a Norovirus outbreak from occurring under all circumstances, the following precautions will help identify and reduce the likelihood of an outbreak becoming established:



## Hygiene

- Encourage good hand washing practices among all staff and post hand washing signs for staff and guests.



## Cleaning and sanitizing

- Train staff on the routine cleaning and sanitizing procedures for hand contact surfaces such as taps, door handles, hand railings, etc. and laundry/linen handling procedures.
- Regularly scheduled cleaning and sanitizing of common areas where virus may be transmitted among guests is also recommended (gyms, pools, business centres and games room).
- Ensure staff are familiar with and practice the procedures for handling of human waste/fluids (vomit/diarrhea).



## Staff Illness

- Staff ill with vomiting and/or diarrhea should not be working. As a general guideline, staff should remain off work for a minimum of 48 hours from their last bout of vomiting and/or diarrhea.
- Food-handlers with vomiting and/or diarrhea must remain off work for a minimum of 72 hours from last symptoms. If diarrhea and/or vomiting in a food-handler is thought to be caused by another organism other than norovirus, the criteria for determining length of exclusion from work may vary from 72 hours.
- Ill staff should be reminded not to work at other hotels, resorts or restaurants for a minimum of 72 hours from their last bout of vomiting and/or diarrhea.



## Monitor and Report

Encourage staff and guests to report vomiting and diarrhea incidents on the premise. If you observe increased numbers of illnesses (vomiting and diarrhea) report this to the local health authority. In the event of a suspected outbreak, **Vancouver Coastal Health** should be notified as soon as possible. Please refer to the contact information on p. 19. Recommendations will be provided to assist in determining the control measures needed to minimize the impact on guests and staff.



# Cleaning Procedure for Vomiting and Fecal Incidents

## Step by step procedure for flat surfaces (floors, tables, sinks):

**PURPOSE:** Vomit and feces may contain bacteria or virus that may cause illness that if not cleaned up properly, may spread and infect other staff or guests.

**GENERAL PROCEDURE:** Those responsible for cleaning up vomit and feces should protect themselves by wearing gloves and protective clothing (optional). The area should be cleaned of soil (remove solids and soak up liquid waste), sanitized, then rinsed.

### Materials recommended

Have these materials pre-assembled in a spill clean up kit:

- garbage bags and masking tape
- gloves – non-latex, disposable (vinyl, poly or nitrile)
- paper towels or sorbent material
- detergent solution
- water
- sanitizing agent such as bleach tablets (Presept, 0.5g sodium dichloroisocyanurate tablets) or 5% domestic liquid bleach
- signs, barrier tape (optional)
- protective clothing (optional)



### Step-by-step procedure for flat surfaces (floors, tables, sinks):

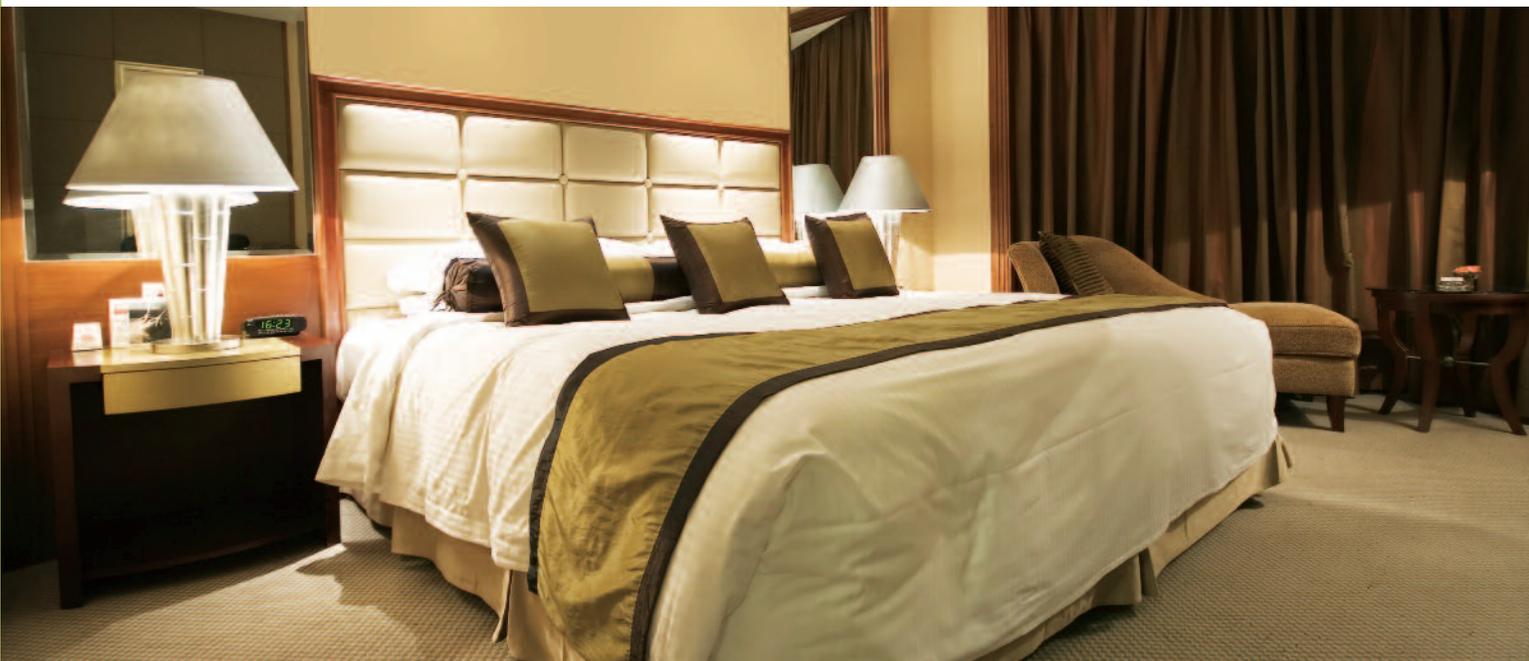
- If required, control pedestrian traffic through the area by asking someone direct people away from the site, posting a sign, or putting up barrier tape.
- Put on 2 pairs of gloves†.
- Prepare the sanitizing solution by adding 10 bleach tablets to 500 mL of water, or ½ cup domestic 5% bleach (100 mL) to 1 Litre of water (final concentration is about 5000ppm)
- Open the garbage bag† and put near the spill site.
- Using paper towels or a sorbent material clean up the soiled material and excess liquid and place into the garbage bag.
- Put the outer pair of dirty gloves into the garbage bag.
- Pour detergent solution around the spill site, and use paper towels to move the liquid into the dirty area. Once the area is wet, use the paper towels to clean the area and discard into garbage.
- Cover the site with clean paper towels and pour the bleach solution onto the paper towels. Wait one minute.
- Remove the paper towels to the garbage bag.
- Rinse with water and dry the surface. Put all paper towels into the garbage bag.
- Remove the other pair of gloves and place into the garbage bag.
- Seal the garbage bag with tape. The garbage is ready for disposal.

† colour coding can be used to distinguish clean from soiled.

# Cleaning Protocols for Guestrooms with Vomiting and/or Fecal Contamination

**The following measures are recommended to ensure guest rooms are properly cleaned to avoid future illnesses with new guests and staff.**

- Trained staff should do the cleaning, optimally a cleaning team is assigned these tasks.
- All necessary cleaning equipment and supplies are brought to the room at one time. Once the team enters the room, they do not leave until all the work is completed.
- The team should wear protective clothing/equipment.
- All areas of the room are to be cleaned and sanitized. Special attention should be focused on frequently touched items such as door knobs, light switches, telephones, remote controls etc. and the garbage can.
- Bag dirty linens and towels and take directly to the laundry. Consider using water soluble bags and tag as "heavily soiled".
- Badly soiled linen and towels are bagged and properly discarded or incinerated.
- All dishes, glasses, trays and ice buckets must be removed from sick rooms (even if they appear untouched), and taken to a designated location for immediate washing.
- Do not vacuum a room soiled with vomit and feces (vacuuming creates aerosols that may contain bacteria or viruses that can cause illness). Carpets should be cleaned using a steam cleaner which reaches a minimum temperature of 71°C unless the floor coverings are not heat tolerant.
- Ensure an adequate supply of clean towels, toilet paper and soap.
- Drapes should be replaced and bagged for laundry or steam-cleaning.
- All dishes should be replaced in the room even if they appear untouched.



# Enhanced Cleaning and Operational Protocols for Common Areas when an increased number of illnesses occur

## Public Areas and Rooms

- Post hand-washing signs to encourage good hand washing practices among all staff and guests.
- Use disposable paper wipes for cleaning to avoid the possibility of cross contamination.
- Use the proper chemical sanitizing agent following the manufacturer's contact time.
- Frequently clean and sanitize handrails, handles, e.g. door, cabinet, fridge, etc and any other hand contact surfaces, elevators and landings in all guest corridors.
- Frequently clean and sanitize all public rooms.
- Carpets should be cleaned using a steam cleaner which reaches a minimum temperature of 71°C unless the floor coverings are not heat tolerant (some carpets can only be steamed to 40°C otherwise shrinkage and colour runs may occur). Carpets should be cleaned at least three metres around the soiled area.
- Frequently clean and sanitize garbage cans.
- Clean and sanitize soft furnishings, steam clean if the items are heat tolerant.
- If the bar fridge has been opened, replace all items.

## Staff Areas

- Post hand-washing signs to encourage good hand washing practices among all staff.
- Use disposable paper wipes for cleaning to avoid the possibility of cross contamination.
- Use the proper chemical sanitizing agent following the manufacturer's contact time.
- Frequently clean and sanitize handrails, handles, telephones, and any other hand contact areas, elevators and landings in all staff areas.

## Public Restrooms

- Post hand-washing signs to encourage good hand washing practices among all staff and guests.
- Frequently clean and sanitize door handles, toilet flushers, doors, faucets, dryers, counters and any other hand contact surfaces.
- Provide either an air-dryer or disposable paper towels for hand-drying (only single use cotton towels are permitted).
- Maintain the supply of soap and paper towels.
- Use disposable paper wipes for cleaning and the proper chemical sanitizing agent following the manufacturer's contact time.



## Bar and Lounge

- Post hand-washing signs to encourage good hand washing practices among all staff and guests.
- Staff must wash hands frequently.
- Hand sanitizer or wipes are provided to staff to complement good handwashing practices.
- No self-serve items should be available to guests (eg, peanuts, water).
- Snacks should be provided by staff on request in small individually sized containers, one container per guest.
- All condiments are served by staff, or cleaned frequently (recommended to clean between each customer use).
- Use disposable paper wipes for cleaning.
- Clean and sanitize all tables and chairs with a detergent solution and sanitizer (with correct contact time) after each shift and after closing.

## Spa and Salon

- Post hand-washing signs to encourage good hand washing practices among all staff and guests.
- Staff must wash hands frequently.
- No magazine or reading materials should be available to guests.
- Use disposable paper wipes for cleaning.
- Use the proper chemical sanitizing agent following the manufacturer's contact time.
- Ensure common use tools and materials are cleaned with detergent and sanitized after each use.

## Fitness Centre

- Post hand-washing signs to encourage good hand washing practices among all staff and guests.
- Staff must wash hands frequently.
- Use disposable paper wipes for cleaning.
- Use the proper chemical sanitizing agent following the manufacturer's contact time.
- All surfaces are cleaned and sanitized frequently.
- Equipment must be cleaned and sanitized at least once during each shift.

## Games Room

- Post hand-washing signs to encourage good hand washing practices among all staff and guests.
- Staff must wash hands frequently.
- Use disposable paper wipes for cleaning.
- Use the proper chemical sanitizing agent following the manufacturer's contact time
- All surfaces are cleaned and sanitized frequently
- Equipment is cleaned and sanitized at least once during each shift. Pay special attention to control sticks, handles, knobs and buttons.



## Laundry Protocols

when an elevated number of illnesses occur

**The following measures are recommended to prevent staff & guest illness from laundry operations.**

- Staff should wear protective clothing and gloves when handling soiled laundry.
- Visibly soiled laundry should be washed in water soluble bags. Extensively soiled laundry should be discarded during clean-up in the ill guest room.
- Staff should never shake out soiled laundry before it has been cleaned.
- Dedicate one machine clearly for washing of soiled laundry.
- The minimum wash temperature for laundry is 74°C (165°F).
- Clean and sanitize the front loading area of the machine frequently.
- Clearly mark laundry bins. Ensure dirty laundry is stored in marked dirty laundry bins only.
- Dirty laundry must not enter the dryer room where clean laundry is handled.
- Dirty laundry bins must be cleaned with detergent and sanitized with a sanitizing agent (with correct contact time) daily.
- Facility operators should ensure that offsite laundry services return clean linens in clean and sanitized bins.
- Staff must wash hands frequently and especially after handling any dirty laundry.



# Food Services Enhanced Operational Protocols

## when an increased number of illnesses occur

### Dining

- Post hand-washing signs to encourage good hand washing practices among all staff and guests.
- Remove any self-serve items for guests. These will include self-serve mints and matches at the entrance, self-serve desserts at central locations, buffets or self-serve sugars and creamer at tables. All items must be served by staff.
- Clean and sanitize menus frequently.
- Clean and sanitize tables and chairs with a detergent solution and sanitizer (with correct contact time) after each use and after closing (or each shift).
- Clean and sanitize all service stations with a detergent solution and sanitizer (with correct contact time) after each shift.

### Buffet

- Staff must hand out all trays, plates and cutlery, napkins, cups and condiments.
- During non-service hours to the buffet remove all serving line plates, cups, cutlery, napkins and trays to prevent potential contamination.

### Warewashing

- Post hand-washing signs to encourage good hand washing practices among all staff.
- Dishes, glasses etc. from ill guests and ill guest rooms must be handled separately, and washed immediately.
- All washing should include a pre-rinse step, where dishes are immersed in water. Do not use sprayers that create aerosols.
- Dishwashing practices must adhere to the Food Premises Regulation.
- Temperatures must be monitored in a log as per your Food Safety Plan.
- Clean and sanitize all dish carts with a detergent solution and sanitizing solution (with correct contact time) after each shift.
- Clean and sanitize all dish buckets (dirty and clean) with a detergent solution and sanitizing solution (with correct contact time) after each shift.
- Maintain separation between clean and dirty dishes and operations in the dish washing area.



# Notice to all guests and visitors

**An increased number of gastrointestinal illnesses have been observed in this community. We have implemented control measures to reduce the likelihood of illness throughout the hotel.**

Please take the following precautions to avoid contracting or spreading illness:

- wash your hands frequently
- inform the desk manager if you become ill
- inform the desk manager if you observe any areas requiring cleaning

Thank you for your cooperation!



Cut out or photocopy  
Guest Notification Form

## Example of Hand-Washing Signs

# Wash Your Hands

Lavez-vous les mains

손을 씻으세요      ਆਪਣੇ ਹੱਥ ਧੋਵੋ

洗手      دست هایتان را بشوئید

Lávese las manos      Hãy rửa tay



Cut out or photocopy  
"Wash Your Hands" sign  
or download from  
[www.vch.ca/environmental/food/](http://www.vch.ca/environmental/food/)  
and post near sinks

# How To Wash Your Hands



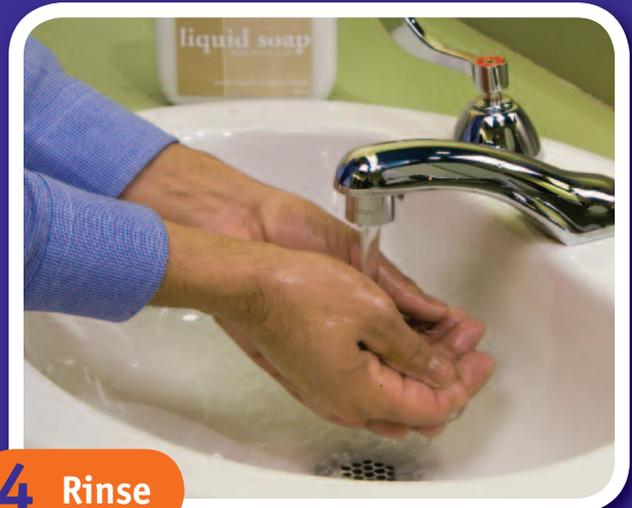
**1** Wet Hands



**2** Apply Soap



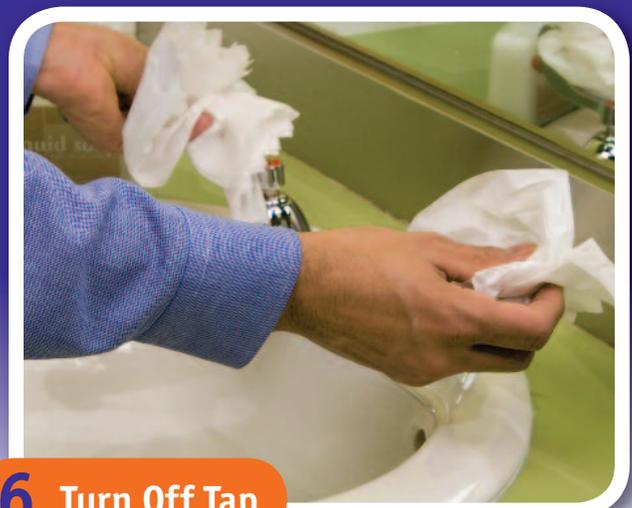
**3** Rub Together



**4** Rinse



**5** Dry



**6** Turn Off Tap

Cut out or photocopy  
“How to Wash Your Hands” sign  
or download from  
[www.vch.ca/environmental/food/](http://www.vch.ca/environmental/food/)  
and post near sinks

## Example of Illness Log

The purpose of an illness log is to record daily observations listing the numbers of ill staff and guests in the hotel to assist in determining if the number of illnesses is increasing. When recording staff and guest illnesses, include just those who report with the gastrointestinal illness symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea.

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The following items should appear on the log sheet:

- Date
- Did any staff report ill? Yes or No.
- Record the number of staff who reported ill that day.
- Record the staff position(s) of those reporting ill (eg, food handler, desk clerk)
- Did any guests report ill? Yes or No.
- Record the number of guests who reported ill that day.
- Did any tour groups arrive with guests or drivers reporting ill? Yes or No.
- Record the total numbers of reported illnesses in the groups.
- Did housekeeping report any soiled guest rooms "sick rooms"? Yes or No.
- Record the number of sick rooms that day.
- Record the room numbers for all sick rooms cleaned that day.

An example log sheet appears on the next page.



## References:

1. BCCDC Laboratory Services. A Guide to the Laboratory Investigation of Gastrointestinal Disease Outbreaks: 2003.
2. Cartwright, R. Gastric Flu Outbreaks in Hotels. Pilot Guidelines for FTO members: 2002
3. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta: Norwalk-Like Viruses:public health importance and outbreak management. MMWR 1990; Vol 50 No. RR-9
4. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta: Viral agents of gastroenteritis: public health importance and outbreak management. MMWR 1990; Vol 39 No. RR-5
5. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention. Vessel Sanitation Program Manual 2000. Atlanta:US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000.
6. Chadwick PR et al. Management of hospital outbreaks of gastroenteritis due to small round-structured viruses. Journal of Hospital Infection 2000 May; 45(1): 1-10.
7. Widdowson et al. Outbreaks of Acute Gastroenteritis on Cruise Ships and on Land: Identification of a Predominant Circulating Strain of Norvirus -United States, 2002. Journal of Infectious Diseases: 2004:190:27-36
8. Heymann DL. Control of Communicable Diseases Manual. American Public Health Association. 2004.
9. Michigan Department of Community Health: Local Health Department Guidelines for Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection of Norovirus. May 2005.

## For more information, call or visit:

### Vancouver Coastal Health:

E-mail: [environmental.health@vch.ca](mailto:environmental.health@vch.ca)

Coast Garibaldi: **1 877 892 2231**

North Shore: **604 983 6700**

Richmond: **604 233 3147**

Vancouver: **604 675 3800**

[www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca)

### BC Centre for Disease Control

[www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/a-z/\\_n/Norovirus/default.htm](http://www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/a-z/_n/Norovirus/default.htm)

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/gastro/norovirus.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/gastro/norovirus.htm)



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This information was compiled by the BC Centre for Disease Control, Health Canada Workplace Health and Public Safety Cruise Ship Inspection Program and Vancouver Coastal Health Authority—Office of the Chief Medical Health Officer

