



**IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR  
FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS (11/28/07)**

Central Michigan District Health Department  
*"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"*

Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon Counties

Visit our website at [www.cmdhd.org](http://www.cmdhd.org).

Your assistance is requested in helping to stop the spread of a viral-like gastroenteritis (commonly referred to as the "stomach flu").

Every year, the Central Michigan District Health Department and Michigan Department of Community Health receive reports from many different areas locally and throughout Michigan of people with a vomiting and diarrheal illness.

The viral-like illness is similar to a disease caused by a germ called the Norovirus. Norovirus causes abdominal cramping, vomiting, and diarrhea. The symptoms last 1 – 2 days. The time from exposure to the onset of symptoms is an average of 36 hours. The most common way a Norovirus outbreak is spread is via the fecal-oral route. However, this virus also lives on hard surfaces (like door knobs, handles, etc.) much longer than other viruses.

Food services establishments can greatly contribute to STOPPING the spread of this viral-like gastroenteritis in several important ways.

- Review safe food handling practices with ALL employees, most importantly, stress FREQUENT hand washing, and NEVER handle ready to eat food with bare hands.
- Monitor your employees for signs of the "stomach flu". Any employee that has had any vomiting and or diarrhea should not be allowed to work and not be allowed to return to work for at least 3 days after the symptoms subside.
- Employees who feel ill need to stay home from work as well as from other events that put them into contact with groups of people.
- Any food that an ill employee has handled should be immediately discarded and any food handling devices used by the ill employee should be immediately disinfected using the guidelines provided.
- All dish cleaning devices should be checked to make sure they are operating properly so as to insure that any germs on the dishes are destroyed.

If you have any questions regarding safe food handling or employee illness please contact your local branch office of the Central Michigan District Health Department. You can also visit our website at [www.cmdhd.org](http://www.cmdhd.org) for other helpful information.

Sincerely,  
Mary Kushion, MSA  
Health Officer

Robert Graham, DO, MPH  
Medical Director