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Norovirus Health Information

May 8, 2008

The San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) was notified on Wednesday May 7, 2008, of several persons that became ill after attending or working at conferences at the Moscone Center in San Francisco from April 30, 2008 through May 8, 2008. The SFDPH is working with the organizers of the meeting facilities to make cleaning recommendations and to confirm the cause of the illnesses. The ill attendees/workers are suspected to have a viral illness called Norovirus. Noroviruses are a common cause of the “stomach flu,” or gastroenteritis (GAS-tro-en-ter-I-tis).

What are the symptoms of illness caused by Noroviruses?

The symptoms of norovirus illness include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping. Sometimes people also have a low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, and a general sense of tiredness. The illness often begins suddenly and the infected person may feel very sick. The illness is usually brief, with symptoms lasting only about 1 or 2 days.

Are Noroviruses contagious?

Noroviruses are very contagious and can spread easily from person to person. Noroviruses are found in the stool or vomit of infected people. People can become infected with the virus in several ways, including:

- Eating food or drinking liquids that are contaminated with Norovirus;
- Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with Norovirus, and then placing their hand in their mouth;
- Having direct contact with another person who is infected and showing symptoms (for example, when caring for someone with illness, or sharing foods or eating utensils with someone who is ill).

Persons suspected of being ill with Norovirus should abstain from attending or working at any Moscone Center conferences until 48 hours after symptoms have resolved.

How can Norovirus infections be prevented?

- **Frequently wash your hands, especially after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food.**
- **Carefully wash fruits and vegetables, and steam oysters before eating them.**
- **Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness by using a bleach-based household cleaner.**
- **Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with virus after an episode of illness (use hot water and soap).**
- **Flush or discard any vomit and/or stool in the toilet and make sure that the surrounding area is kept clean.**
- **Persons who are infected with Norovirus should not prepare food while they have symptoms and for 3 days after they recover from their illness.**

Information on more Frequently Asked Questions on Norovirus can be viewed on the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) website at <http://www.sfdcdp.org/norovirus.cfm>

If you have further questions, please call the Communicable Disease Control Unit at (415) 554-2830.