

GASTROENTERITIS (GI) INTRODUCTION & DEFINITIONS

GASTROENTERITIS: Defined as any one of the following gastrointestinal (GI) conditions **that cannot be attributed to another cause** such as new medications, laxative use, prior or current medical conditions causing diarrhea:

- Two or more liquid or watery stools ([Bristol Stool Chart Type 7](#)) above what is considered normal for the individual within a 24-hour period; or
- Two or more episodes of vomiting in a 24 hour period; or
- One episode each of vomiting and diarrhea in a 24 hour period; or
- Positive culture for a known enteric pathogen and symptoms of GI infection (vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea).

NOROVIRUS: A group of viruses that commonly cause gastroenteritis. A **confirmed case** requires laboratory confirmation. Prominent **symptoms** include frequent, liquid or watery stools and projectile vomiting. The **incubation period** is usually 24-48 hours. Transmission occurs by person-to-person via the fecal-oral route. Illness usually lasts 12 – 60 hours.

GASTROENTERITIS OUTBREAK: Suspected when **3 or more** residents/patients and/or staff meet the case definition of Gastroenteritis (see above), in the same geographic area within a **4 day period**.

GASTROENTERITIS OUTBREAK STAGES

1. **Suspected Outbreak:** A cluster of 3 residents/patients with sudden onset gastrointestinal infection (defined above), not attributed to another cause. This triggers: communication with IPAC, initiation of control measures, and collection of specimens.
2. **Declared Outbreak:** The causative organism is confirmed, and the VCH Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) in conjunction with the Vancouver Coastal Health Medical Health Officer (MHO), declare the outbreak. The decision to close the unit or facility to admissions and transfers will be made by the IPAC Medical Microbiologist in collaboration with the Medical Health Officer upon confirmation of the outbreak.
3. **Concluded Outbreak:** 2 incubation periods (96 hours) with no new cases identified and the Vancouver MHO declares the outbreak over.

KAPLAN'S CRITERIA

In the absence of laboratory confirmation, an outbreak occurring in a long-term care facility of acute gastroenteritis due to norovirus infection may be assumed to be present if all of the following criteria are present ('Kaplan Criteria'):

- a) Vomiting in more than half of affected persons;
- b) A mean (or median) incubation period of 24 to 48 hours;
- c) A mean (or median) duration of illness of 12 to 60 hours; and
- d) No bacterial pathogen identified in stool culture.



GASTROINTESTINAL OUTBREAK LEADER (Manager, PCC, RCC, EHO, MHO)

The GI Outbreak Leader is by default the Site Leader and may be delegated to another appropriate leader, such as the unit manager. The Outbreak Leader has the authority to institute outbreak control measures. Responsibilities include:

- Collaborating with IPAC and the unit care team to expedite control measures
- Establishing outbreak management team
- Scheduling and leading daily outbreak meetings (T-Con)
- Setting up an outbreak debrief meeting after the outbreak has concluded