

Norovirus on the rise in Virginia

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RICHMOND, VA (WWBT) -

There's an illness that's rearing its head once again this year, the norovirus. It hit the Richmond area badly last winter, and, according to local doctors, it's back with a vengeance.

This month, there's been at least three recorded norovirus outbreaks at schools and a nursing home in Virginia, according to the State Health Department, and numerous individuals were diagnosed at Patient First Medical Center on East Parham Rd. in Henrico alone. "Within the last week or two, I've seen an influx," Patient First Medical Center's Dr. Christopher Dietz said.

It's the same virus that shut down Farmville's Hampden-Sydney College for a week last winter and, around the same time, had this medical clinic struggling to keep up.

"Last year was bad for us. We were seeing a lot of it. We actually ran out of IV fluids at some point and had them on back-order," Dr. Dietz said.

Norovirus comes from stool, and people can come in contact with it in multiple ways. "We get it typically from either ingesting it through food, contaminated water, contaminated fruits, vegetables, or it's on our hands, and we take our unwashed hands to our face," Dr. Dietz said.

He says it's those unwashed hands and poor hygiene that also helps the virus spread, and those infected won't even know it right away. "Most people when they pick up the virus, they don't know they have it yet, but they are shedding the virus typically one to two days before they're even having symptoms," he says. Those symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and muscle pain that can cause the intestines to inflame and become irritated.

Once those symptoms hit, another two or three days will go by before the virus passes. Staying hydrated is the key to recovery and to avoid passing it on to others is staying home.

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