



**Educational Service Center**  
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February 2, 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian:

We have become aware of a possible viral gastroenteritis (GAS-tro-en-ter-i-tis) outbreak among students in Bay and Arenac Counties. We are working closely with the Bay County Health Department in response to this increase in illness.

Though several viruses can cause gastroenteritis, norovirus is the most common. All are easily transmitted through food, by person-to-person contact, or through contaminated surfaces. Therefore, take caution if one of your family members is affected because the virus spreads easily in the home as well. Norovirus is sometimes called the "stomach flu", but is not related to influenza (the flu), which is a respiratory viral illness that causes fever, cough, chills, headache, muscle aches, runny nose, and sore throat.

Norovirus often causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramping. Symptoms may also include low-grade fever, headache, weakness, and muscle aches. Symptoms can begin as early as 12 hours after exposure to the virus or as late as 48 hours. The symptoms of norovirus usually last 1 to 2 days. In most cases, ill persons fully recover without medical attention. However, norovirus infection can result in hospitalization due mainly to dehydration, especially in the very young and elderly. Those with severe diarrhea should drink lots of liquids. Symptoms that are not seen with norovirus infection are bloody diarrhea or high fever. If these symptoms develop, we advise contacting your medical provider.

Children and staff exhibiting symptoms of viral gastroenteritis should be excluded from school or other group activities until 48 hours after their symptoms have stopped.

The best way to limit the spread of these viruses is frequent hand washing for at least 20 seconds using soap and warm running water, being sure to completely clean all areas of hands and under fingernails. Preventing contamination of food, drinks, water, and ice is also very important. People who have been sick with norovirus-like symptoms should not prepare or serve food to others for at least 3 days after their symptoms are gone. It's important to know that most household cleaners are ineffective against norovirus and bleach is the only reliable means of disinfection. Please refer to the cleaning and disinfection guidelines on the back of this letter.

Further information about norovirus and how to limit its spread can be found on our website at [www.baisd.net](http://www.baisd.net) or you may contact me at 989.667.3281.

Sincerely,

Deborah Kadish  
Superintendent



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Educational Excellence