

# Norovirus Outbreaks: Control Measures Part II

Anne Winter RN, BScN, MHSc, CIC  
Senior Epidemiologist, OAHPP

Yvonne Whitfield BSc, A.D.D.(EH), MPh (Cand.) C.P.H.I.(C)  
Senior Program Consultant, MOHLTC

# Overview of Presentation

- Update on a “Guide to the Control of Gastroenteritis Outbreaks in Long-Term Care and Retirement Home Settings”
- Highlight recommendations from the Norovirus Position Statement pertaining to:
  - Staff exclusion
  - Declaring an outbreak over
- Discuss visitor restriction during gastroenteritis outbreaks
- Highlight norovirus outbreaks in the community

# MOHLTC Guidelines

- A Guide to the Control of Gastroenteritis outbreaks in Long-Term Care and Retirement Home Settings- revision of the 1993 version
- June 2006 – Working Group was created
  - Consisted of 24 members from 13 health units, Public Health Lab and MOHLTC

# Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of the Guide is to assist Long-Term Care and Retirement Homes by providing recommendations for the prevention, detection, management and control of gastroenteritis outbreaks

# Purpose of the Guide

These guide will provide practical information that will help to:

- Develop outbreak management policies and procedures
- Increase understanding of the importance of surveillance and early identification and isolation of cases to prevent disease spread
- Educate facility staff on policies and procedures and the importance of routine practices
- Assist in responding to and managing a gastroenteritis outbreak should one occur
- Provide procedures for managing outbreaks associated with food

## Current Status of the Draft Guide

- Has undergone external stakeholder consultation
- Revised in 2010 to include information on *C. difficile*
- Final internal review currently taking place.
- Electronic version will be released to public health units following internal approval.

## Staff Exclusion: Health Care Workers...Considerations

- Difficulty in determining the effect of viral shedding on infectivity
- Most research studies agree on excluding staff for a **minimum** of 48 hours after symptom resolution
- Enteric Diseases Surveillance Protocol for Ontario Hospitals, 2009 – recommends 48 hours exclusion
- Exclude non-essential staff during the outbreak (volunteers, students)

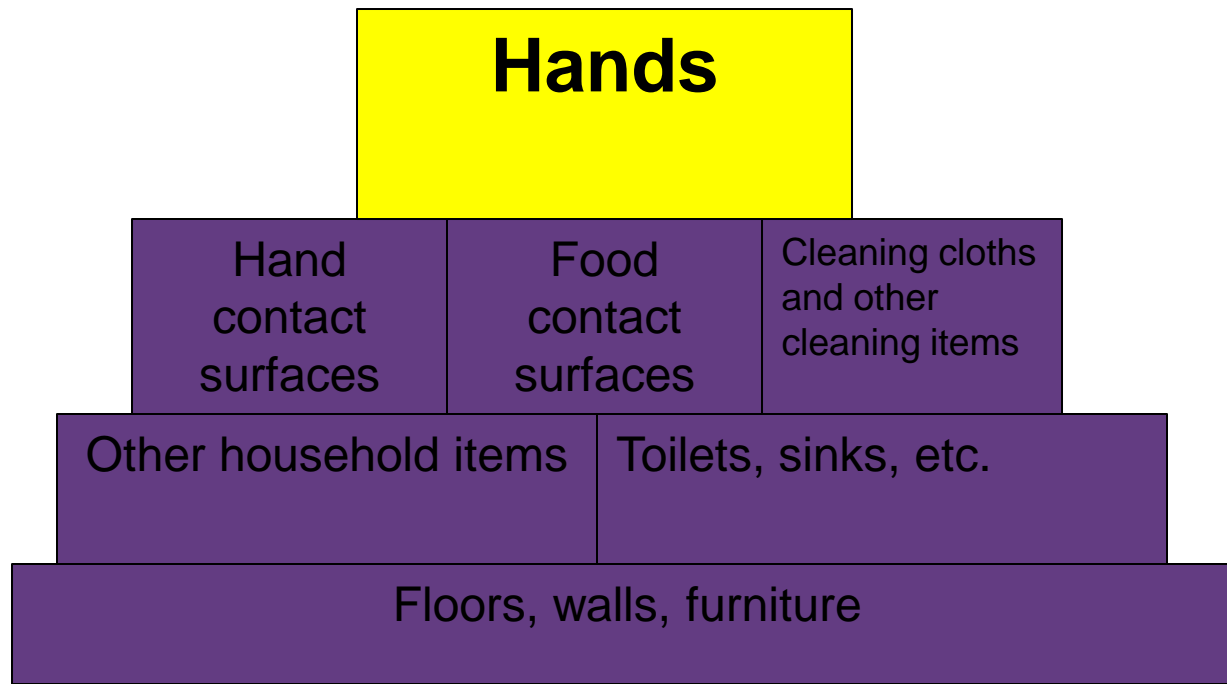
## Staff exclusion: Health Care Workers con't.

- If possible, have returning staff care for ill or exposed patients/residents
- Cohorting staff, if an option
- Adherence to hand hygiene is key

# Staff Exclusion: Food Handlers

- Exclude food handlers for a **minimum** of 48 hours after symptoms resolve
- Adherence to hand hygiene
- If possible, assume non-food handling responsibilities

# Ranking sites in homes based on risk of disease transmission



# Patient/resident management

- Contact precautions to remain in place at least 48 hours after symptom resolution
- Potentially longer isolation times for specific populations (prolonged viral shedding)
- Minimize movement of ill residents/patients

# Declaring Outbreak Over

- *Norovirus* Position Statement

Outbreaks of *Norovirus* can be declared over when there are no new cases after five days (one incubation period (2 days) plus one period of communicability (3 days))

- Criteria for declaring a *Norovirus* outbreak over may be modified by the health unit in collaboration with the Outbreak Management Team where applicable.

# Declaring Outbreak Over cont'd.

## Considerations:

- Declaring the outbreak over should be based on epidemiology of the outbreak in conjunction with conducting a risk assessment
- Epidemiological evidence should indicate that the outbreak is under control, infection prevention and control measures have been appropriately applied and adhered to, and that the number of cases has diminished to baseline levels.
- The risk assessment supports decreasing some of the control measures which will not prolong the outbreak nor compromise the well-being of the residents/patients, visitors or staff

# Visitor restrictions

- Routine self-screening of visitors
- Restrict “non essential” visitors
- Inform visitors that there is an outbreak
- Education about appropriate IPAC measures

# Outbreaks in community settings

- Food borne outbreaks of *Norovirus* most often related to transmission of virus by contaminated hands, rather than contamination of food source (not food poisoning but food contamination)
- Education, education, education
  - Hand hygiene
  - Stay home when ill
  - Do not handle food when ill

# Outbreaks in community settings con't

- Education, education, education
  - Return to work/school/daycare 48 hours after symptoms resolve
  - Dedicated washroom, if possible
  - Environmental cleaning

# Thank you