



For Immediate Release

Health Officials Suspect Norwalk Virus

Kent, Ohio

April 21, 2008 4:00 p.m.

City, county and state health officials have been working together to investigate what has caused so many people to become ill. Persons reporting severe illness had eaten at the Chipotle Mexican Grille located on St. Rt. 59 in Kent, Ohio between Tuesday April 15<sup>th</sup> and Friday April 18<sup>th</sup>. Reported symptoms include severe vomiting, diarrhea, nausea and cramping. Food collected during the investigation and stool samples collected from ill patients have been sent to the Ohio Department of Health testing lab. Official results will be available later this week. Health officials have collected enough information to suspect norovirus.

As of 4:51 p.m. Monday, there have been a total of 432 persons reporting norovirus symptoms. No reported cases have occurred since the restaurant re-opened on Saturday. People seeking medical care through Robinson Memorial Hospital and Kent State's DeWeese Health Center have significantly decreased since Friday and Saturday afternoon.

Like all viral infections, noroviruses are not affected by treatment with antibiotics, and cannot grow outside of a person's body. The symptoms of norovirus illness usually include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping. Sometimes people additionally 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.

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).

Noroviruses are very contagious and can spread easily from person to person. Both stool and vomit are infectious. People infected with norovirus are contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill to at least 3 days after recovery. Some people may be contagious for as long as 2

weeks after recovery. Therefore, it is particularly important for people to use good handwashing and other hygienic practices after they have recently recovered from norovirus illness.

Good handwashing means using plenty of soap and warm water; rubbing hands together for 20-30 seconds. 20-30 seconds is about the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice or the alphabet once.

More information about norovirus can be found by visiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

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